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The Theology of the Early
Christian Church

New and Uniform Edition.

THE CONGREGATIONAL LECTURE,
EIGHTH SERIES.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN
CHURCH.

BY JAMES BENNETT, D.D.

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THE THEOLOGY

OF THE

EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH,

EXHIBITED

IN QUOTATIONS FROM THE WRITERS OF THE
FIRST THREE CENTURIES.

With Reflections.



BY JAMES BENNETT, D.D.

"Ego enim fateor charitati tue, solis eis scripturarum libris qui jam canonici appellantur didici hunc timorem honoremque deferre ut nullum eorum autorem scribendo aliquid errasse firmissime credam. Ac si aliquid in eis offendero literis quod videatur contrarium veritati nihil aliud quam vel mendosum esse codicem vel interpretem non assecutum esse quod dictum est vel me minime intellexisse non ambigam. Alios autem ita lego ut quantalibet sanctitate doctrinaque præpolleant non ideo verum putem quia ipsi ita ceuserunt."—*August. Hieronymo*, Epist. xix. vol. 2, p. 11.

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MDCCCLV.

P R E F A C E.

THE following course of Lectures being designed to afford the means of judging, by copious extracts, of the theology of the first ages of the church, the reflections which are interspersed may be regarded as mere helps to the formation of just conclusions, and may be adopted or rejected according to the degree of evidence which they present. As the selections are the result of an independent research in the works of each writer, the translations also were made at the same time, and are so far literal, perhaps, as to be often inelegant; but it is only by this more simple honest course that the cause of truth is to be maintained and advanced.

On all great questions the quotations are sufficiently continuous to enable the reader to judge of the connexion; and where the extracts are brief, the references are so minute as to enable the scholar to verify the sense. When this depends on the rendering of a few words, these are given in a foot note; but to have furnished the originals of the whole would have required a second volume. Where the testimonies were too numerous for the space that could be afforded, the earliest have been preferred, as more strictly belonging to our era, as having, in the highest degree, what can be called patristic authority, and

as so generally followed by their successors, that these are virtually quoted by the adoption of this plan.

Those theological common places which are least debatable have been passed over most rapidly; the later writers have been omitted where they are mere copyists; and, when a quotation has once been given, with its reference for verification, a second appeal for a new purpose has not always been equally formal.

On the doctrine concerning the church, which may be characterized, in the language of Peter, as "the present truth," Clemens Romanus, as the father of the fathers, has been our oracle, to which Rome herself could scarcely object.

The sacraments being first mentioned by Justin in the middle of the second century, we have abridged the account given when the Lectures were delivered, and on other points the auditors of the course may observe that we have been compelled to throw into the smaller type of the Appendix what would have occupied too much room in the body of the work.

The few references to fathers of an age later than that of which we write were introduced to supply the defect of evidence in their predecessors, or to show that the light which was expiring was not immediately extinct. As among these the testimony of Jerome is of great value, it is given in the Appendix.

That in a range so wide, embracing the whole body of divinity, no mistakes can be found, the author is too well aware of his own fallibility to affirm. He will not, however, feel bound to admit an error merely because the same writer has, in another place, expressed an opinion different from that which has been quoted; for though Augustine alone has written *Retractations*, the fathers were not always consistent with themselves.

Of the history of the church, though not assigned to the lecturer, it seems necessary to give a sketch, which, how-

ever slight, may throw additional light on our course. The Author of our religion having lived and taught upon earth about thirty-three years, on his return to heaven, sent down his Spirit to give birth to the church, which was first formed of native Jews. But when that nation rejected and persecuted the faith, it was in the fortieth year of our era preached to the Gentiles, after which the religion that was destined to universality and perpetuity spread rapidly over the world. In the principal cities, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, and Athens, the foundations of the churches were laid by the apostles; but in Rome itself by their early converts.

If Claudius afflicted the Christians, it was only as they were Jews; for Nero, one of the worst of men, is branded by the fathers as the first imperial persecutor of the best of religions. Under him, Paul and Peter are said to have become martyrs, and it is supposed that the rest of the apostles, except John, quickly followed in the same road to heaven. Vespasian having destroyed the Jewish nation, in the year 70, his worst son and successor, Domitian, banished to Patmos the Apostle John, who survived but a short time after his return to Asia. Josephus, who had been taken captive by the father, wrote, under the persecuting son, his celebrated history.

The first Christian document that we possess, Clement's Letter to the Corinthians, was written in the reign of Trajan, during the earliest years of the second century, and was, perhaps, soon followed by the letters of Ignatius, whom that respectable prince doomed to the lions. The correspondence between the emperor and Pliny proves, however, that ignorance rather than cruelty was the parent of these persecutions.

Though Hadrian restrained the violence which had been inflamed by the calumnies of pagan priests and philosophers, as well as by the extravagances of heretics, the false Messiah Barcochebas gave vent to the enmity of the Jews.

The apologies of Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, and others, seem to have made a favourable impression on the rulers of the world.

Of the philosophical emperors, Antoninus Pius, under the influence of a refined heathenism, gave some repose to the afflicted church ; but Aurelius, about the middle of the second century, allowed, if he did not instigate, the persecutions that raged, about the year 177, when Polycarp, Justin, and the martyrs of Lyons and Vienne in France, sealed the truth with their blood. During this period Irenæus wrote. The reign of Septimus Severus is infamous for the cruelties exercised against the Christians, at least towards the beginning of the third century, when Clemens Alexandrinus, Origen, and Tertullian, bear witness to the talents, industry, and sufferings of the church.

Alexander Severus, about the year 220, gave repose to the Christians, under the wise counsels of his mother Mammæa; and as Philip the Arabian has been strangely called a Christian, it may be presumed he was not a persecutor. The cruelties of Decius first gave the character to the latter part of the third century, which presents a stirring field to the civil historian, but to the eye of a Christian is a mere aceldama, a field of blood.

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THE THEOLOGY

OF THE

EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

LECTURE I.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION.

THE theology of the early Christian church, the theme of the present course of Lectures, is not the peculiar creed of one era, but in reality the theology of every age. To use the language of the ancients, "the church of God, through the whole world, and under all dispensations, has one Lord, one faith;" for she relies, not on the changeable opinions of fallible men, but on a revelation from the omniscient and immutable Mind. The faith may, however, have existed, at some periods, in greater purity, with the unlearned and unobtrusive, who leave no records to posterity, than among the authors from whom alone our information must be obtained; and as the Catholic church is the aggregate of Catholic churches, each of these is liable to fluctuations, one being commended by the sovereign head, for "holding fast the truth," while another is threatened with the loss of its church state—"the removal of the candlestick out of its place." But in proportion as a church loses the spirit of religion, her degenerate

sons make their boast of a name, with the apostate Jews exclaiming, "The temple of the Lord are these;" and that which calls herself *the* church, claiming an immutability derived from an infallible chair, is precisely the one which an apostle was inspired thus to warn: "Be not high-minded, but fear; lest God spare not thee."

If ancient churches perish, new ones are called into existence; and while the body is immortal, its constituent parts may be so changed as to require much spiritual discernment to discover their "local habitation and their name." Truth being the test of that church against which "the gates of hell shall not prevail," it cannot be uninteresting to inquire how much or how little of this vital principle is to be found among communities, or individuals, at any given period of time; and what excites more intense interest than the primitive age? The history of the earliest church at "Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all," is, with that of her elder daughters, recorded in the inspired book of the Apostles' Acts. Here begins, and alas! ends, too, as some of the ancients have observed, all veritable ecclesiastical history.

Through the age that immediately followed, since it is left unrecorded, we have to feel, rather than see, our way, by the aid of guides that are often little else than blind and lame. So many early writings have perished that we might conclude they were thought not worth preserving, did we not know that accident, or negligence, or craft, rather than judgment or good design, have deprived us of works whose titles alone survive. Some that had been for ages lost have, in modern times, been recovered; while of those that were always extant, many are anonymous, and not a few are the productions of men once in high repute, but subsequently branded as heretics. The earliest wrote in Greek; for Latin, which has since claimed to be the language of the church, was, during the first centuries, dumb.

Next to the writers on theology are the translators of the Scriptures, as witnesses to what the ancient church thought to be the mind of God in his revelation to man. The Syriac and the Latin, however, are all that have come down from the most ancient times, and the latter is so altered as to make its testimony equivocal.

Our last source of information is ecclesiastical history, which is meagre and unsatisfactory; for the oldest work is lost, and Eusebius wrote as late as the fourth century, though he has preserved to us many relics of an earlier age. The civil historians and pagan writers afford us no light, except in a few sentences of Sulpicius Severus, and a letter of the younger Pliny; for the hints ascribed to Lucian are of a doubtful age. Two Jewish authors, Philo and Josephus, shed an accidental and flickering light on our path; and some apocryphal books, in consequence of having early obtained an undue credit, show what those who received them thought. We now proceed to give a sketch of the writers from whom we derive our information, commencing with those whose supposed connexion with the apostles has conferred on them the title of apostolical fathers.

The author of the letter to Diognetus we place first; for as he calls himself a disciple of the apostles, so, on other evidence, he claims to be ranked among the apostolical fathers. The letter, though anonymous, is manifestly of the highest date, and of the greatest theological worth. Henry Stephens, who first discovered and published it, in 1592, appended it to the works of the earliest apologist, Justin Martyr; supposing that Diognetus, to whom it was addressed, was the celebrated tutor of Marcus Aurelius; but Tillemont,* whose prejudices would have adopted, was compelled, by evidence, to reject this opinion. The styles

* *Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire Ecclesiastique des Six premiers Siècles.* Article 12, vol. ii. pt. 2. Des ouvrages de St. Justin qui sont perdus.

of Cicero and Tacitus, or those of Addison and Gibbon, are not more dissimilar than the composition of Justin and that of the writer to Diognetus. The sentences of the Martyr are loose, prolix, and inaccurate, with somewhat of a morose tone and a foreign air; while those of the letter writer have all the benevolent grace of the Christian, with all the elegant simplicity, luminous terseness, and logical finish, of a practised author in his native Greek.

Calling himself "a disciple of the apostles, and therefore a teacher of the Gentiles," he displays the scriptural purity of the apostolic times; for the genuine portion of the letter is entirely free from the spirit of allegory, which so deeply infected Justin, and each following age. With the sanctity of motive and benevolence of heart which are worthy of the convert of an apostle, this writer recommends Christianity, as a sect just sprung up in the world, for which he gives a sensible and true reason, in reply to the common objections against the novelty of our faith.

Christians he describes, with the intense earnestness of one who was anxious that they should be known to a candid inquirer; and his censures on the Jews, as a proud nation, glorying in their election, their temple, their ritual, and their circumcision, prove the letter to have been written before the year 70, when the Jewish city, and temple, and nation, were crushed by the iron mace of Vespasian. In a string of antitheses, nicely balanced, it is said, "the Greeks persecute, and the Jews wage war upon us," as if the latter had still the command of a military force. That the letter was, however, written subsequently to the time when the council of Jerusalem, and the Epistle to the Hebrews, had satisfied Christians in general, that the Levitical ceremonies were abolished, appears from the declaration,—“We neither think those to be gods who are esteemed such by the Gentiles, nor observe the superstition of the Jews.”*

* Chap. i.

Tillemont judiciously concludes that, from the word *οἱ ἄλλοι*, in the middle of the eleventh chapter, another hand appears ; so that the genuine epistle closes with an apostolic text: "He who was dishonoured by the people, preached by apostles, believed on by the Gentiles," &c.* The remainder is alien from the preceding, and could not have been understood by the person to whom the letter was addressed.

In strong contrast with the superior sense of all that precedes, the interpolation is an allegory that might be turned upside down, to establish opposite conclusions, without being rendered more absurd. Its date and design are betrayed by a charge against "transgressing the decrees of the fathers," which is a blundering anachronism, as the body of the epistle speaks of apostolic times. We take this earliest opportunity of exposing what have been called pious frauds, such additions and alterations in the documents of antiquity as have rendered them suspicious authorities, which perpetually require the most vigilant circumspection, in applying them to historical or theological use.

The genuine epistle has been, by some, ascribed to Clement of Rome, to whose letter it bears no shadow of resemblance ; by others, to Apollos ; and by Whiston, to Timothy, which are mere unsupported conjectures, that serve only to show the marks of high antiquity, which, to the conviction of all, this letter bears. No Christian scholar can read it without being inspired with profound veneration for its author, as a noble specimen of the genuine primitive disciples of Christ. Happy had it been for the church of God, and for the world, if the apologists for our faith had always displayed the good sense, the pure benevolence, and the uncorrupted Scriptural truth which shine in the epistle to Diognetus. Jortin's objections to it, which are bereft of the superior discernment

* 1 Tim. iii. 16.

and candour he usually displays, might, with equal truth, be applied to Paul's address on Mars' Hill ; and it is to be feared that in this, as well as some other instances, the epistle has been opposed, or neglected, because it was too orthodox and evangelical.

That this most ancient apologetic letter should have early fallen into oblivious neglect, from which it has but recently been restored to its due celebrity, is indeed disgraceful to Christians, but is not surprising ; for it is too apostolic for the taste of the times that soon followed ; though, for that reason, it demands our special regards. Diognetus seems to have been a sincere inquirer into the evidences of Christianity, which he hesitated to adopt, from a lurking fear of his paternal gods, and a suspicion that the sect so recently sprung up might deserve the grave charges with which Christians were on all hands assailed. His correspondent, therefore, exposes the absurdity of idolatry, and proves the innocence of Christ's disciples. If he seems to bear hard upon the Jews, the first and fiercest persecutors of our faith, and almost to make infidel objections to the Mosaic law ; the apostles were supposed, by their countrymen, to do the same, when contending against that superstitious adherence to sacrifices, for their own worth, which was the ruin of the once-favoured race. Diognetus is wisely reminded, that, if our religion was but recently revealed, God determined in his eternal councils that Christ should, at the end of the world, appear, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. This gives rise to the most beautiful eulogium on his atonement, and righteousness, and our justification, that the whole compass of ecclesiastical literature contains.

Clemens Romanus, or Clement of Rome, is the first uninspired Christian writer whose name is known. The most diligent research, however, has not ascertained his country, or conversion ; his exact era, or the order of his succession to the Roman pastorate ; the time, or place, or

manner, of his death. Eusebius concluded, from the slender evidence of the identity of the name, as much as from the early date of the letter, that this Clement was he "whose name was said to be in the book of life." That he governed the church of Rome, after Peter, Jerome affirms; but so variously is the order of its first bishops recorded by the earliest writers, that we may be sure it was to them unknown. Clement has been, by confounding him with Flavius Clemens, pronounced a *noble* Roman; but his epistle is not written in Latin, and its contents lead us to suspect, that he, like many of the early Christian pastors, may have been a Hellenist, or Jew whose native tongue was Greek. Because he speaks in the present tense, of the temple service, he has been thought to have written before the year 68, while Jerusalem was standing; but what may be a mere rhetorical figure is no evidence; and as *he* gives reason to conclude, that all the apostles had then finished their testimony, so *we* can scarcely suppose that the Christians at Corinth would have sent a deputation to consult the church at Rome, while they had an inspired apostle nearer at hand.* The earliest date, therefore, that we can assign to the genuine Clementine epistle is the year 96, when John was, by Domitian, banished from all intercourse with the church; though it is still more probable that the last apostle was then removed to heaven. It has, indeed, been positively asserted that Clement fed the church at Rome, from the year 93, to 102.† The persecution to which he refers, as then raging, was probably that of Trajan, which Pliny shows to have been of long continuance, though not of unmitigated severity.

When, or where, or how, Clement died, we know not;

* The name of Fortunatus, mentioned by Clement, as sent from Corinth, was too common to prove that this was the person referred to, 1 Cor. xvi. 17.

† Du Pin, Tillemont, and others, think that Clement was not a bishop, till the year 91 or 93.

for since none of the earliest fathers call him a martyr, we must regard as fabulous the story of his banishment to Chersonesus, and his being drowned by order of Aufidianus.

The only genuine production of this writer is what is called his first epistle; for the highest antiquity knew no other, and that which passes for his second is a forgery that can scarcely be called even an imitation of the first. But the real letter, though read in the earliest churches, as next to the Scriptures, its writer being called an apostle by the younger Clement, was lost sight of, till it came into England, appended to the famous Alexandrian manuscript, and was published by Patrick Young. So little attention was paid by those who boasted of tradition to the earliest and most precious relic of the apostolical fathers, that Bellarmine, while calling Clement a Pope, denied the existence of his epistle. It is now, however, universally admitted; for the objections of Grotius are rejected as futile.

The letter itself is not that of Clement, but of the whole church at Rome, though doubtless written by their pastor, in answer to an epistle from the church at Corinth, brought by a deputation of its members, on account of a disturbance in which some pastors had been deposed.* In calling this the epistle of Clement, therefore, we sacrifice strict accuracy to convenient popular usage; and when we pronounce it valuable, we refer to its historic worth, and its superiority to other writings of an early age. It is distinguished by that kind of simplicity which arises from what may be called, in a good sense, an affected imitation of the inspired writings, which renders it utterly unlike the native classical style of the epistle to Diognetus. Clement is a preacher rather than epistolator; rambling over the whole Bible, on which he gives comments, usually

* Clemens Alexandrinus calls it the Epistle of the Romans to the Corinthians. Strom. V. p. 427.

pious, but sometimes foolish, and seldom very instructive. The worst consequence of this injudicious course is, that we are left to guess at the exact question in dispute, and to wish that we could give away the well-meant sermonizing declamation for a strict letter of business. Of its fifty-nine chapters, or short sections, some contain nothing but quotations of Scripture, which, however, are valuable as testimonies to the Divine writings, and proofs of the exclusive authority attached to them, as well as of their abundant and familiar use in the earliest churches of Christ. Clement appeals almost exclusively to the Old Testament, which he knew only in that Greek version called the Septuagint.

He sometimes founds his arguments on words which have no prototype in the original, to say nothing of hints at apocryphal authority. He allegorizes so egregiously that his arguments must often have fallen as pointless darts at the feet of those who had any superior knowledge of the Word of God. His strange comments on the resurrection seem to be an unwise attempt to imitate an apostle. Because Paul had written the 15th chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, Clement, though writing on a totally different question, must do something in the same line, and thus has left on his letter a blot of folly, which will ever sink the reputation of the apostolical fathers. He gravely adduces, as a fact, the fable of the phoenix, to show that God has given in nature proofs of the resurrection of the body. For this conceit, in which he is followed by other fathers, who are sure to adopt the worst thoughts of their predecessors, Clement runs the tremendous risk of sanctioning idolatry. For the phoenix comes to a heathen temple to deposit the bones of its progenitor; and the Egyptian priests are the mystagogues to calculate the times, and ascertain that it was exactly five hundred years since the prodigy last occurred. But, when Clement speaks of what he understands,

his aim is so pure that his spirit is excellent, and the tendency of his exhortation is to promote the peace, and holiness, and prosperity, of the church. He, unlike Ignatius, keeps himself out of sight, assuming no priestly airs, but claiming authority for the Word of God alone, and exhibiting Christ as the Redeemer, example, and sovereign Lord. The fear of God ever before his eyes, and the love of the brethren burning in his breast, often raise him above his numerous disadvantages, and exert over the conscience of the reader an authority which far superior learning, reason, or eloquence, could never rival.

The importance of this epistle, in various points of view, it would be difficult to overrate. This is the link of connexion between the inspired and uninspired writings of the Christian church. Here centres almost the whole of the real value of the testimony of the fathers, and the sincere lover of them should deposit this letter in his bosom as a jewel. For, if Clement was the first pastor of the church at Rome, and especially if he was the man eulogized by Paul, he the more clearly shows what was apostolical; but if he was the third in succession, then it is demonstrated, that, even so low down in the descending scale towards the divinely predicted apostasy, the Christian church was still at antipodes from the hierarchy of modern times. This letter from the church at Rome shows that the body of the faithful lost their liberties, not merely by the ambition of pastors, but by popular turbulence; for Clement, though an humble man, fearlessly declares, that the presbyters whom the Corinthians had displaced were made the innocent victims of three or four factious men. This naturally induced the more modest and devout Christians to yield to the pastors the sole government of the church, just as the peaceable members of society suffer the horrors of a bloody revolution to terminate in military despotism.

The epistle of Clement became the innocent occasion of hastening this consummation so much to be deplored. That it was publicly read in the churches, though *after* the inspired Scriptures, was a disgrace to the early Christians, and leads us to regret that Clement ever wrote. He would have acted more wisely, if he had sent the messengers back to their church, with Paul's epistles written to themselves; for his own makes no really valuable addition, and the reading of it gave a pernicious example of setting up the authority of the fathers as a rival to that of prophets and apostles. To this letter may be traced the mania for allegory, which at length Judaized or Paganized the Christian church. The comparison Clement forms between the Jewish temple and the Christian church; the Aaronic priesthood, and the evangelical ministry; the abolished sacrificial rites, and our spiritual worship, though innocently, if not wisely intended, proved the box of Pandora out of which innumerable evils flew. What was with him mere figure and illustration was converted by his successors into argument and authority. Still, however, too pure to be suffered to continue and repeat its testimony, this first and best document of the fathers, after being read in the churches, was consigned to oblivion, and has but recently returned to testify against the general corruption of our age. Clement, the oldest known writer, never pretends to have seen the apostles, nor tells us a word that was heard to drop from their lips; but arguing from Scripture, just as we may, he exhorts the Corinthians to "take up the epistle of the blessed Paul, written to them." Would that the fathers had confined themselves to such advice! For one inspired book is worth more than all their ponderous tomes.

Ignatius, called also Theophorus, god-bearer, was probably a native of Syria, as he was bishop in Antioch, its capital; though he wrote, not in Syriac, but Greek, which was in familiar use where the disciples of Christ

were first called by the Greek name of Christians. Evodius, the first bishop in Antioch, was eclipsed by the lustre which martyrdom has thrown around his successor, who, though called a disciple of the apostle John, and forty years a bishop, is known, almost exclusively, as sent to Rome to make sport for its citizens in the theatre, by being thrown to the wild beasts. Guarded on the way by soldiers, whom he called leopards, (perhaps as our dragoons were originally pronounced dragons,) they are charged with requiting his kindness by cruelty, though he was still suffered to visit the Christians, and write letters which have acquired more than their due share of celebrity in the annals of the primitive church.

On his arrival at Rome, he was brought forth to the gaze of the infuriate heathen, and so completely devoured by the beasts that nothing was left but the harder bones, which are said, by the Greek narrator, to have been wrapped in a napkin and sent to Antioch as a precious treasure. If we compute from the year 70, when he appears to have been called to office, and add the forty years that are assigned to his ministry, he must have died, as Eusebius says, about the year 110; but, though Usher fixes on 107, more modern writers have agreed in assigning his martyrdom to the year 116.*

It is well known that, under the name of Ignatius, many epistles have been published that are now abandoned as spurious; and that only seven, at the utmost, are deemed worthy of credit. But after sweeping away many false pretenders, it can excite no surprise if the discerning reader entertains strong suspicions, that what are called the genuine epistles are either fabrications, or, at least, so interpolated as to shake our confidence in their testimony.

* Others have supposed that Ignatius died in the year 112, or 113. The letter of Pliny to Trajan has been assigned to the time when the Emperor was in the East preparing for the Persian war, and Christians were condemned for neglecting the quindecennialia of Trajan in 112.

No one can compare them with the epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, without perceiving that more than the lapse of a century is required to account for the difference. It is true that the letters of Ignatius profess to have been written, after the church had passed the period when Hegesippus, the first ecclesiastical historian, says, she ceased to be a pure virgin; but the epistle of Polycarp, who died half a century later, can bear comparison with that of Clement; while those of Ignatius require us to sin against almost every canon of criticism before we can receive them as both genuine and uninterpolated.

That their salutations are pompous and affected, so heaping up words as to set translation at defiance, and that the sentences are unfinished and incoherent, we see at the first glance. The marks of a later age, when the pride of prelacy became rampant, compel us to suspect either a fabrication or an addition, by some person, who, wishing to magnify his office, availed himself of the name of a martyr, supposed to have written epistles to more than one church. It must, however, be observed, that English versions have aggravated the evil, by unfairly inserting the term priest, where the original contains, not the correspondent word, but presbyter, or elder.

These letters exhibit a grotesque compound of simplicity and pomposity, that betrays, either the difference between the author and the interpolator, or a struggle between the Orientalisms of the Syrian and the better taste of the Greek writers. The figures in which Ignatius abounds are often so forced as to betray him into such impieties as comparing the Holy Ghost to a rope that draws us up to lofty heights, by the machinery of the cross. But the great fault of this writer, if the genuine Theophrastus, is vanity; for, with death in view, he is so full of himself that any humble Christian, at Antioch, might have said, "I pray God that this weak old man may not fail at last, and prove an apostate, instead of a martyr."

Ancient Christians, however, made more of this one martyred bishop than the Scriptures make of Stephen and all the twelve apostles.

If the epistles are entirely genuine, they prove the very opposite of that for which they are adduced—the apostolic origin of prelacy. For here we see a child parading a new toy, of which he thinks he can never make enough. The last of the apostles being dead, the opportunity is seized for fabricating a distinction between the presbyter and bishop; so that, henceforth, the bishops shall possess monarchical authority, having under them the presbyters as inferiors. The extreme anxiety to obtain submission betrays a consciousness of a novel assumption, for which the early extension of the church at Antioch, probably, gave both occasion and encouragement. Still, however, Ignatius mentions “the *presbyters*,” as the body “worthy of the honour of the college of apostles; while the bishop was to be honoured as Jesus Christ, or even obeyed, as Christ obeyed the Father.” The vain prelate pledges his soul for the safety of those who obeyed the bishop; and the rash expression, “I am your expiation,” *περίψημα*, however favourably interpreted, stands in singular contrast with the words of him who said,—“Was Paul crucified for you?” Eagerness for martyrdom shows, indeed, sincerity, though expressed in language that evinces no small conceit of the glory, if not of the merit, of the sacrifice, as the price of heaven. If we mourn over the many censurable things ascribed to Ignatius, we seek consolation in the hope that injudicious admirers have inserted what he would have blushed to write. The best friends to his memory are those who would, in reading these letters, often exclaim—“An enemy has done this.” If we could invent an apology for him, it would be derived from the heresies which were then rising, and which seemed to make it necessary to oppose to them some *one*, as the champion of the truth, for the

sake of which he should be armed with the authority of the church.

Polycarp, bishop of the church in Smyrna, was, for good sense, far superior to Ignatius; and, if we are to judge by his letter, was a more eminent Christian; but we know he has escaped the injury done to the memory of the martyr of Antioch by writings forged in his name. An epistle addressed to the church at Philippi by "Polycarp and the elders with him," the only document left by that venerable martyr, contains little else but texts of Scripture, wisely and devoutly applied to the exigencies of the times. The salutation is simple and scriptural, a beautiful contrast to the Asiatic pomp of Ignatius.

A letter from the Christians at Smyrna to the Philippians, which records the martyrdom of Polycarp, is rendered suspicious by a confession that when it was lost, and almost destroyed by time, it was recovered by a revelation from the departed saint. He is said to have been burnt alive at Smyrna, in the year 166, and the stories told of miracles wrought at his death serve only to show the simplicity and truth of the Scriptures in their account of the martyrdom of Stephen.

When commanded to abjure the Saviour, Polycarp replied, "Eighty-six years have I served him, who has never injured me; how can I curse my Saviour?" He has been pronounced, but without sufficient evidence, the angel of the church at Smyrna to whom Christ addressed one of the seven epistles of the Revelations, and to have been acquainted with John and other apostles. His letter happily corrects the false impressions conveyed by those of Ignatius; and as it terminates the writings of the apostolic fathers, bringing them down below the middle of the second century, it deserves the more attention. That so much simplicity, truth, and humble piety, survived in Smyrna, down to the year 166, is a cordial to the breast that has been wounded by the early signs of reck-

less haste towards the apostasy of which the church had been so solemnly warned.

Justin, called the martyr, to distinguish him from the historian, was the son of Priscus, and grandson of Bacchius. Though a Samaritan, being born at Neapolis, still called Naplous, near Sichem, he was, by education, a pagan; and after passing from one school of philosophy to another, was converted from Plato to Christ, by meeting with an aged Christian in a solitary walk. Retaining the philosopher's cloak, he taught Christianity at Rome, and when persecution raged under Antoninus Pius, addressed to him an apology, which was followed by a second to the Roman senate. But Justin's largest work is a dialogue with Trypho, a learned Jew, who had fled from the calamities brought on his country by Hadrian. In this work, which, perhaps, is not strictly historical, but, to some extent, an imitation of the Socratic dialogue, the martyr displays a respectable knowledge of the Hebrew language, Scriptures, and rites; while the Jew acts but an insignificant part.

In his second apology, Justin speaks of the plots laid against his life by Crescens, a cynic philosopher, whom he had convicted of ignorance, imposture, and debauchery; and, as Justin predicted, the baffled foe avenged himself by causing his opponent to be put to death. He was beheaded by order of Rusticus, prefect of Rome, in the sixth year of Marcus Antoninus, the philosopher, or about 167 of the Christian era, and the sixty-fourth of the martyr's age.

For a recent convert, he displays considerable acquaintance with the Old Testament; but his judgment cannot be trusted; for he has made some strange mistakes; though Middleton has prematurely triumphed in the discovery of the idol Semo, which is no proof that Simon Magus was not worshipped at Rome. The corruption of Christianity by what was called philosophy may be traced

to Justin, who is at once fanciful and dogmatical, founding arguments on allegories, to the neglect of substantial verities nearer at hand, and often making assertions where he could have no proofs. He labours to show that Christ was the God who appeared to the patriarchs; but is so defective in his statement of the trinity, that, after the council of Nice, he would have been deemed an Arian. His sincerity was sealed by his blood; though his philosophy often tyrannized over his faith; and, if he was not the author, as he is the first Christian promulgator of the dogma of the apostasy of angels, by their falling in love with women, his dogmatizing was a calamity, rather than a triumph to Christianity; for it spread through the church the "doctrines of dæmons." Subsequent ages seem to have concluded, that a philosopher who became a believer and a martyr must be an oracle. Of the works attributed to him, only the two Apologies and the Dialogue are sufficiently attested to demand our notice.

Tatian, from his native country denominated the Assyrian, may be appended to the preceding writer, of whom he was the disciple and successor. But even the few theological hints which he furnishes have been deprived of authority by his early adoption of what was called the heresy of the Enekratites. Originally a disciple of Crescens, the enmity of that virtual murderer of Justin was probably inflamed by seeing Tatian pass over from the Cynic to the Christian school. Rhodon, a follower of Tatian, says, he succeeded Justin in the chair of Christian philosophy at Rome. About the year 168, he seems to have written his Oration to the Greeks, where we detect the germs of the heresy into which he afterwards fell. He is thought to have returned, about the year 178, to his native Assyria, to propagate the dogmas of the Enekratites, or Continent, denouncing marriage as a sin, and abandoning the use of animal food. Severus, who engrafted on the original stock some additional heresies, gave to the

sect the name of Severians. About the time that Irenæus wrote on heresies, Tatian died.

His other works have perished; but his Oration to the Greeks reminds us of his master, Justin, whom he lauds as a philosopher, affirming that the Greeks stole what they call their discoveries from those they term barbarians. Tatian pours forth much eloquent vituperation on paganism; but his own views of Christianity are false. The Word, or Son of God, he seems to think the divine attribute of knowledge or wisdom; of angels he speaks much to little purpose; and souls he considers naturally mortal, those of the wicked being destined to die with the body, but to rise again with it, to be punished. From this heresiarch it is of little use to quote.

Theophilus of Antioch, who had been a heathen philosopher, says, "Though I did not believe the resurrection, I now believe, having met with the Scriptures of the holy prophets, who, by the Spirit of God, foretold things as they have happened." He was made bishop at Antioch, about the year 168, and was the antagonist of the heretics Marcion and Hermogenes. Though various works have been ascribed to him, we have now nothing but three books addressed to Autolychnus, a pagan philosopher, who had challenged the Christian to enter the lists. Theophilus invites him to study the Scriptures, and like the rest of the fathers, is eloquent against idolatry, but defective in his account of Christianity.

He is the first who employs the Greek word which gave rise to the term trinity. "The three days which preceded the creation of light represented the trinity of God and his word, and his wisdom *τύποι εἰσιν τριάδος τοῦ Θεοῦ*. The creation of water is to show that man would receive repentance and remission of sins by water in the laver of regeneration."* Highly esteemed for learning, Theophilus was mild and benevolent; but his judgment was

* Lib. ii.

enfeebled by the allegorical taste of the times. He is thought to have died in the second year of Commodus, 181.

This sensible, amiable, and learned writer unwisely opposed to the pagans a torrent of heathen learning, appealing to the Sybils, as well as the Greek poets; and in a list of the kings of Egypt and Israel, and of the rulers of Rome, to his own days, he affirms that there were 2242 years before the deluge, which our chronology assigns to the year of the world 1656. It is surprising that, acquainted as he was with the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, he should have adopted the error of Tacitus, and supposed that our Saviour was called Chrestus, because his temper and that of his disciples was *χρηστός*, mild. In this, however, Justin led the way.

Athenagoras, the Athenian, is scarcely known, but as the author of an Apology, which he calls an Embassy for the Christians, addressed to Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, and Lucius Aurelius Commodus. He escaped the notice of Eusebius, Jerome, and Photius; but is mentioned by Epiphanius. Appealing to the emperors as wise and tolerant princes, who suffered all others to worship as they pleased, he complains that the Christian church was cruelly oppressed. The charge of Atheism he refutes, by showing that though Christians rejected all others, they worshipped one God, and that the acknowledged innocence of their lives put to shame the calumnious imputation of eating human flesh and committing in secret the foulest crimes.

Profuse in his declarations of the trinity, he repeats what seems to have become the common faith, or fable, of the amours of angels with women. He condemns second marriages as decent adultery, on the silly plea that God made but one of each sex. He wrote also a Treatise on the Resurrection, which is wearisome and inconclusive, by appealing to philosophy, or anything else, rather

than the only true source of evidence—divine revelation. His Apology was addressed to the emperors, about the year 178.

Irenæus, who is by all the ancients pronounced a Greek father, as his name would lead us to conclude, was, from his earliest years, educated among Christians; for he says, "When a child, I heard Polycarp,"* who lived to a great age. Being sent by this venerable man from the lesser Asia into France, as Gregory of Tours affirms, Irenæus was there ordained presbyter, by Pothinus, the bishop at Lyons, who, in his ninetieth year, died for the faith. Irenæus is thought to have been delegated, though some say he never went, to Rome, with letters from those who were afterwards martyred, at Lyons and Vienne. Made bishop of the church at Lyons, he wrote against the heresies, which then abounded, five books in Greek, under the title of the Refutation of what is falsely called Knowledge, alluding to the Gnostics. The original work was very early lost, and we have little else but a Latin translation, supposed to have been made under the direction of the author. Irenæus, however, though apologizing for the rudeness of one who had lived long among the Celtic Gauls, and had never studied rhetoric, appears, from existing fragments, to have written tolerably well; but the Latin translation is rude and awkward.

Victor, bishop at Rome, having excommunicated the Asiatic Christians for keeping Easter on the fourteenth day of the moon of March, instead of waiting for the following Lord's-day; Irenæus, who himself adopted the Roman practice, wrote to say that he would not excommunicate others for such a cause. He fortifies his remonstrance by relating that Polycarp was once at Rome, while Anicetus was bishop; and that though these two could not agree on this point, they not only communed together, but the pastor yielded to Polycarp the honour of administering the Supper.

* Lib. iii. c. 3.

After presiding over the church at Lyons twenty-four years, Irenæus witnessed the persecution that raged there under Severus, the Christians being slaughtered in such numbers that their blood ran down the streets. Though it has been affirmed that Irenæus then joined the noble army of martyrs,* none of the writers of the first three centuries call him a martyr; and at the age of ninety-two he is said to have mingled in the controversy about Easter, in the tenth year of Commodus.† If the date assigned to Eleutherius, the twelfth bishop at Rome, be correct, Irenæus wrote his work against heresies, between the years 177 and 192, publishing the early chapters some time before the latter part of the work.

This celebrated treatise appeared to the ancients worthy of much higher encomiums than we can bestow. But we are not always sure that we are reading Irenæus; and the heresies having passed away, their refutation has lost its interest. We cannot wonder that the well-intentioned father was blamed by his contemporaries for so deeply exploring and publishing to the world the ravings of madmen, of which a full-length report forms his first book. The second is a repetition of what did not deserve to be told once, and an attempt to reason with men who set reason at defiance.

The best part of the work follows; as the third book records the truths which the heretics opposed, among which Irenæus places the opinion, that Adam was not damned, as Tatian had affirmed. The fourth and fifth books go over the ground again, with additional appeals to Scripture, and remarks on free will and antichrist, and the state of souls after death. His references to Scripture are the best parts of the work.

Irenæus himself has not escaped the charge of heresy;

* Feuudentius says, his martyrdom (itself probably a fable) is referred by Sixtus Senensis to the year 175; by Werner, to 184; by Pamelius, to 203; by Baronius, to 205; by Bergomas, to 210; by the author of the *World's Chronicles*, to 216.

† Lib. iii. c. 3, p. 233.

for he has said many strange things, and in a work so large, few good ones. He was a millenarian, and affirms Christ's descent to Hades to preach to the just. He discovers that to sanctify every age, our Saviour not only passed through childhood, youth, and middle life, but touched upon old age. The charge of Arianism, and of teaching the mortality of souls, is not proved against Irenæus, though he often talks like a Pelagian; and while Tertullian pronounces him *omnium doctrinarum curiosissimus explorator*, he bewildered himself with his researches, and sometimes raises more dust than he lays.

With considerable stores of heathen literature, poetry, and history, being ignorant of Hebrew, his interpretations of the divine names* are ridiculously false, which, however, may be in some degree owing to the unskilfulness of the Latin translator. This wearisome writer gives so very foolish reasons for believing wise doctrines that, if the heretics were convinced by him, they owed their conversion to the heavenly treasure, and not to the earthen vessel in which it was conveyed. Irenæus lived in the age of heresies, which were as much diffused as suppressed by the course that he and others pursued; for they would have far better served the cause of truth by studying the Scriptures more carefully, and instructing their own flocks, than by giving currency to extravagances that should have been left to their own oblivious fate. He gained, however, the temporary applause, not only of Tertullian, but also of Eusebius, who praises him for ferreting out the serpents from their holes, and of the first Cyril, who calls him "the interpreter of the doctrine of the church," more truly had he said, "of the heretics." Irenæus and Gregory Thaumaturgus are pronounced the only fathers of the first three centuries who composed tradition; but the doctrine of the former on this point has been strangely misunderstood. Erasmus, now the acute

* Lib. ii. c. 66.

and bold reformer, and now the timid conservator of superstition, shows both his strength and his weakness in the following sentence: "If Valentinus the philosopher opposed the church, Justin the philosopher, and Irenæus the philosopher, defended it; Marcion the philosopher attacked the truth, and Tertullian the philosopher despatched the enemy; Celsus the philosopher vomited blasphemies against Christ; but Origen, a better philosopher, illustrated the glory of Christ; Libanius the philosopher defended idolatry, but Chrysostom more eloquently defended the true worship."

Titus Flavius Clemens, usually called Alexandrinus, from the scene of his labours, to distinguish him from Clement of Rome, being supposed to be born at Athens, is also occasionally denominated Atheniensis. But neither the place nor the time of his birth is known, though he is thought to have lived about the year 220. Made a presbyter of the church at Alexandria, he succeeded to the office of catechist in its famous Christian school, when Pantænus went to propagate Christianity in the East, or in Ethiopia.

Of his numerous works, one folio volume remains, containing an Exhortation to the Gentiles, the Pædagogus or Schoolmaster, and eight books of Stromata or Miscellanies, for pupils of a higher form. The Treatise, in Origen's works, on the Salvation of a rich Man, is claimed for Clement.

"He penned," says Jerome, "volumes full of eloquence and erudition, not only from the Scriptures, but from human learning." Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem, wrote to the church at Antioch, "These I have transmitted to you, by Clement, a blessed presbyter, illustrious and approved, whom you also know, and will more fully recognize." Origen was his disciple in philosophy, if not in the school of Christ. That Clement was a sincere convert, who wished to promote the Christian religion, cannot

be doubted ; but that he was “spoiled by philosophy and science, falsely so called,” is equally clear. His mind was too full of heathenism to leave due space for Christianity, which was to him little more than the last and best of philosophical sects.

He scarcely mentions the atonement, and supposes the design of Christ's becoming man was to teach men to become gods, a phrase he derives from the 82nd Psalm, which he thoroughly mistakes. Confessing that he was blamed for his philosophising spirit, he defends himself by affirming that the philosophers were taught of God, and that they take from the Hebrew prophets, without acknowledgment ; “For if,” says he, “we affirm that the Greeks derived their wisdom from the devil, we make him more kind to men than God was.” As if there were no other source of philosophy than inspiration from Heaven, *stealing* from the Scriptures, or dealing with the devil. He affirms that the Greek philosophy prepares the soul for Christ, and attempts to explain away the apostle's warning, by a subtle distinction between “the elements of the world ” and true philosophy. Asceticism abounds in his works, which recommend husbands to live with a wife as a sister. But, with all his monkish notions of chastity, he so frequently and indecently recurs to sexual ideas that to read his volume through is a loathsome task.

If sometimes he exhibits to the heathen just views of the Christian character, such passages are, amidst a vast mass of heathen lore, as a pearl or two in a whole bed of unsightly shells. His morality is like that of Socinian writers, a substitute for the merits of Christ, who is introduced so rarely that he appears as a stranger, and so erroneously that we are as much surprised as delighted when we find him invested with the honours which are his due. For Clement too generally displays knowledge without wisdom, mortification without holiness, and zeal without truth.

Yet he is the most important of the non-apostolical Greek fathers; for, while the works of others have either perished, or come down to us in Latin translations, of which we often know the falsehood, and can seldom be sure of the truth; a considerable portion of Clement's writings is extant in the original. Origen, the next of the Greeks, and Tertullian, usually considered the first of the Latins, are charged with heresy; and who can ascertain where their heterodoxy commences, and their orthodoxy ends? Tertullian betrays his Montanism before he quits the Catholic church, and the germs of those errors which made Origen a brand of discord are scattered over his most esteemed works. In Clement we have not only the unsuspected Christian presbyter, but the learned professor of the first and most celebrated school of theology. At Alexandria, first, the religion of Jesus was adopted by philosophers, and made a part of the Eclectic system that professed to gather from all quarters materials to erect the temple of truth.

Clement retired from Egypt, when his celebrity made him the principal mark for the arrows of the persecutors, and is thought to have lived, about the year 218, in Cappadocia, where his disciple, Alexander, was a bishop, imprisoned for the faith. Beyond this we know nothing; except that his memory has been dishonoured by the heretical principles contained in what are called his Hypotypes, which are probably either grossly interpolated, or the work of some other pen.

Origen, called, for his indomitable industry, Adamantius, was the son of Leonidas, who was beheaded for the Christian faith at Alexandria, in the tenth year of Severus Pertinax. As he was left fatherless in his seventeenth year, he must have been born about the 185th year of the Christian era. Their property was confiscated, and the zealous youth who had exhorted his father not to shrink from martyrdom for the sake of his family, laboured to

support six brothers and a widowed mother, who had, previously, been obliged to secrete the clothes of her son, to keep him from joining the martyrs.

When he was only eighteen, he was appointed, by Demetrius, the bishop, to succeed Clement, as catechist; and being afterwards sent with an ecclesiastical epistle to the church at Athens, he was, on passing through Palestine, ordained presbyter by the bishops of Cesaræa and Jerusalem. This offending Demetrius, laid the foundation of that hostility which pursued Origen beyond the grave. He had previously visited Rome, and brought thence Heraclas, a presbyter, who, retaining the dress of a philosopher, was made assistant catechist, and at last successor to Demetrius.

Mammæa, the mother of the Emperor Alexander, was induced by the celebrity of Origen to send for him, that she might enjoy his conversation at Antioch. He was the first of the fathers who took the right method of studying Scripture, by learning Hebrew, in which, however, it is said he was but moderately skilled. He has the honour of originating what are now called polyglot bibles, by collecting various versions of the Scripture in his celebrated Hexapla, which his successors unhappily suffered to perish. He was so renowned for all human science that scholars flocked to him from distant lands, and often learned, not only philosophy, but the truths of Christianity, which he was zealous to impart. When Decius had slain many Christians, Origen fortified, by his letters, the minds of the faithful, while he was himself an exile, through the jealousy of his bishop. Eusebius, in his sixth book, records the merits of this distinguished scholar, who died at Tyre, in his sixty-ninth year, A D. 256.

Having converted from the Valentinian heresy a rich person, named Ambrose, the grateful disciple supplied his teacher with the funds that supported several short-

hand writers to take down his lectures. At the request of his generous friend, he wrote commentaries on the Scriptures to such an extent that twenty volumes are mentioned on the Gospel of John. While it was disputed whether Origen were saint or heretic, he reckoned among his disciples bishops and martyrs.

He spoke too fast, and wrote too much, to be accurate or profound; and he complained that his verbal instructions were inaccurately reported, as his friends also contend that his books were corrupted by heretics. Many of his works have perished, and others exist only in the Latin version of Ruffinus, who confesses that he took the liberty to be a paraphrast rather than translator. We have, therefore, little else to depend upon but his Answer to Celsus, which, remaining entire, does him great credit, though it is not free from the faults of that age. As he had in his youth studied under Ammonius, who mingled Christianity with Platonism, so Porphyry accuses Origen of doing the same thing; and it is remarkable that the heathen philosopher utters a just censure on the manner in which Christians turned the Old Testament into an allegory. Origen, though by far the greatest man of his age, having written more books than other men could read,—some ascribing to him six thousand volumes,—is among the excommunicated, whose works have been condemned. We have, however, quoted the only one that remains in the uncorrupted original, which is censured by none. The *Philocalia*, a compilation of extracts from his works, is of doubtful authority, because we know not the original connexion of the sentences, which is essential to a candid judgment of the sense.

Of the Latin fathers who, compared with some of the preceding writers, are moderns, the first we shall mention is Marcus Minucius Felix, usually placed after Tertullian. But as the age of Minucius is uncertain, so it appears to us earlier than that of Septimius, whom our arrangement

will keep in juxtaposition with his admirer, Cyprian. Of Minucius Felix we have only one short treatise, but this is a precious gem. It shows that Christians were then persecuted, and not suffered to hold public meetings. The writer, a lawyer of high family, was probably the first pleader in the Roman forum who ventured to advocate the cause of the persecuted Christians; not, however, at the bar, for that was not yet suffered, the acknowledgment of the Christian religion being then deemed a confession of the most nefarious crime. The peculiar character of his latinity has induced the conclusion that he was an African, though his family name speaks a noble Roman origin, wherever he may have been born. The work which has handed down the name of Minucius Felix among the fathers, defenders of the Christian faith, is entitled *Octavius*, and, like Cicero's imitations of the Socratic dialogue, is denominated from the chief speaker in the favoured cause. If it is historical, Minucius, and his brother Octavius, a Christian, were accompanied by Cœcilius Natalis, a pagan friend, on a walk from Rome to Ostia; when Natalis, seeing a statue of Serapis, paid to it the accustomed token of adoration. Octavius, who had won his brother to the Christian faith, reminded him that he ought not to have suffered a friend to betray his idolatry without warning him of his error and guilt. At this the heathen took fire, and proudly challenged the Christian to a debate. Minucius Felix was appointed the arbiter between the disputants, though he was the avowed advocate of the Christian cause.

Cœcilius pours forth, with indignant force, all the arguments that paganism could produce against Christianity. He was compelled, however, to contradict himself; for, commencing as a sceptic, enraged at the presumption of the poor despised Christian sect that durst decide on questions of which the philosophers declared we could know nothing, he yet contends for the gods of the heathen

as the authors of that prosperity and dominion which the Roman empire enjoyed. But his principal arguments are derived from charges against the Christians as an impious sect that practised, for religious rites, in secret assemblies, all that was lewd, and cruel, and absurd. For example, he says, that "having assembled the sexes and all the relations of kindred, they tied a dog to the stand which contained the only light, and then throwing offal beyond the end of the string, they induced the dog to overthrow the lamp, that, in the dark, the assembly might practise promiscuous lewdness." From Cæcilius we probably learn all that the pagans did or could say against the Christian faith.

Octavius replies, with great judgment and Christian temper, that scepticism is inexcusable; for the creation abundantly demonstrates the existence, and attributes, and providence, of one God. He shows that even among Polytheists an indelible conviction of the unity of the deity led to those ordinary forms of speech which recognize God rather than the gods. With great learning and eloquence, he exposes the fabulous or human origin of the deities of the pantheon, and observes, that while men adore the idols, spiders spin their webs over them, and the birds, if not driven away, would build their nests in the very mouth of the god. The superstitious opinion, that the Romans owed their empire to their piety to such gods, is triumphantly refuted by the character of Romulus, its founder, and of many who have extended its triumphs. The temples are pronounced brothels, in which the priests committed every abomination. The imposture of the oracles is exposed; but too much is admitted, when demons are said to reside in the images, and deceive men by real announcements of future events. Octavius shows that, having been a heathen himself, he knew by what false charges the world was prejudiced against the new sect, which he triumphantly defends. The Christians are,

then, said neither to worship crosses nor to wish for them; though the heathens paid religious adoration to many things which had the form of a cross. Octavius proves that Christians are not lewd, but chaste; that if they decline civic honours, it is a proof, not that they are poor, but contented; though poverty is not a crime. If they have no images, temples, or altars, it is because they think that a good man is the image and temple of God, and that piety is the only acceptable sacrifice. The Christian's expectation of the last conflagration and future rewards and punishments is defended by the similar opinion of philosophers; while the doctrine of the resurrection is illustrated by many things in nature.

The debate then closed because Cœcilius declared himself a Christian, saying,—“We have both conquered; he is victor over me, and I am triumphant over my error.” We cannot but wish that the change had been more fully related, and that the further instruction of the convert, which was deferred to the following day, had come down to us, which would have rendered this most precious document of Christian antiquity complete.

Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus is usually placed at the head of the Latin fathers. His history is involved in singular obscurity; for the earliest writers have told us little more than we can gather from his works, which leave us uncertain of the time and place of his birth or death, as well as of the sphere of his labours, or whether he was a minister of the church, though Jerome calls him a presbyter. As an African, he has been thought a black and even a negro; but he probably was a descendant from those Romans, who, after the fall of ancient Carthage, colonized the north of Africa, where his father was a proconsular centurion. We know not how old he was when he said, “To our age there are not yet two hundred and fifty years;” meaning, either from the birth or death of Christ.*

* *Ad nationes*, lib. i. 7.

He speaks of himself as a convert from heathenism who had "lived in all iniquity." He was, however, well educated, having been destined to the Roman bar, and it is conjectured that he lived at Rome all the time that he spent in the bosom of the church; for this hammer of the heretics became himself a Montanist, and retiring to Carthage, died out of the hallowed pale. As Jerome ascribes this to the treatment of the Roman clergy, it has been concluded that Tertullian was disappointed in not being made a bishop. The suspicion is, however, utterly unsustained by his works, that prove him to have been displeased with the moral state of the church, on which he pours torrents of reproach.

Though Tillemont supposes that Proculus seduced Tertullian, he was the victim of his own asceticism, which induced him to believe fanatical prophecies, and to write against other Christians as *ψυχικοί*, animal men, for their indulgence of the flesh. He quitted, however, the Montanists, but instead of returning to what was called the church, he formed a sect called Tertullianists, whom Augustine, at last, allured back to the Catholic communion. Tertullian is supposed to have died at Carthage, about the year 245, having reached nearly the age of ninety years, one-half of which he spent among heretics or schismatics. This, however, destroyed not his influence; for though Jerome, when pressed with his authority, replied, "He was not a man of the church;" Cyprian daily called for Tertullian's works, saying, "Give me my master." Of the obscurity of his African Latin, Lactantius complains, which may console us when puzzled with sentences that are riddles; and Augustine condemns the levity with which the elder father returns insincere and insufficient answers to grave objections, saying anything that would silence an adversary. Though he could, when he pleased, be simple and clear; he seems to have become unintelligible, by introducing, for the sake of rhetorical

effect, common-places, with little regard to their appropriateness or truth.

The exordium to his great work against Marcion destroys our confidence in his testimony, and raises a blush for his unchristian spirit. The strength and weakness of the human mind appear in this as in all his writings, which breathe the spirit of Montanism, and make it a nugatory question, whether his Prescriptions, or any other treatise, was written before or after he left the Catholic church. Though acquainted with Greek, he appeals not to the original of the New Testament, but obstinately confines himself to a Latin version, sometimes heretically corrupt. It is to be feared that he was one of that numerous class of reflecting men, who, seeing that other systems could produce no evidence, adopted the Christian religion as true, without really knowing what it was. Almost, if not entirely, ignorant of his own fallen state, he rarely mentions the atonement or justification; and the morality which engrossed his attention is of a spurious kind. Conceited, arrogant, and fierce, his very humility is proud; and his contention for the faith betrays that spirit which inspired the familiars of the Inquisition. His addresses on behalf of the persecuted believers are powerful and often convincing; but, for want of the humility and benevolence of the Christian spirit, not persuasive. His perpetual theme was mortification of the flesh, a principal branch of which was continence or chastity. While condemning those who denounced marriage as absolutely sinful, chastity, in his estimation, was their practice without the doctrine; and his language implies that the death of children was to be esteemed a blessing. With all his parade of sanctity, falsely so called, disgusting impurity defiles his page; and a sincere votary of Rome would do penance for the crime of reading what our first indignant impulse would lead us to fling into the flames. Who would dare to publish in English a literal

translation of what was written in the vernacular language of his day, by the man who takes care to tell that he was indeed a father?*. Turning from Tertullian to the New Testament, we emerge from darkness to light; from the pride of genius to the meekness of wisdom; from spurious to genuine virtue; from fierce austerity to tender benevolence; from the arrogance of self-confidence to the humility of faith; and from the boasts of a false penitence to glorying in the cross. The order of his works, though of great importance to the question of their authority, opens an interminable debate; and while several are lost, some that bear his name are unquestionably the productions of another mind. His love of paradox may be known by one specimen:—"The Son of God was born; I am not ashamed of it, because it is a thing to be ashamed of. The Son of God died; this is altogether credible, because it is absurd. After he was buried, he rose again; it is certain, because it is impossible."

Cecilius Cyprianus was, though doubtless of Roman blood, by birth an African, and a rhetorician of some eminence, till about the year 246, when he was won to the Christian faith by the efforts of Cecilius, whose name the convert adopted as his own. Giving up all his property to relieve the poor, he was soon made a presbyter; and on the death of Donatus, was chosen bishop at Carthage, by the suffrages of the faithful.

During the Decian persecution, the people having shouted, "Cyprian to the lions," he withdrew into concealment, but continued to govern the church, as far as practicable, by letters. On his return to Carthage, he convened a council to consider what should be done with those who, to escape death, had worshipped idols. Cyprian, disapproving the facility with which the lapsed were restored to the communion of the church at Rome, required those who had been baptized by heretics to be

* De Anima, c. 27.

rebaptized, on entering the church; while he that is now called Pope Stephen haughtily condemned this African decree. These contests occupied the remaining days of Cyprian, who might have been much better employed. He closed a life of conflict by a noble death, being beheaded for the faith, at Sexti, near Carthage, in the year 258.

We can easily believe what one of his contemporaries asserted, that he daily read Tertullian, of whom Cyprian is often the mere echo. His works consist chiefly of letters; though he wrote, immediately after his baptism, a florid declamation on the virtues of what he calls the *genitalis aqua*; and at a subsequent period, a Treatise on the Unity of the Church. His tract against the Jews is little more than a string of texts. As a martyr, he has obtained a celebrity which he could never have acquired as a theologian; but his style is more pure and perspicuous than that of Tertullian, and his spirit far more Christian. If, however, we believe but a moiety of what he says concerning the conduct of Christians in his day, we must consider them so corrupt that little regard is due to their practice, and not much to their creed. Called into the ministry on account of his rank and celebrity, before he had well learned what he should teach, his life was too much agitated with persecution and contention to leave sufficient leisure for subsequent theological research. He is a favourite with the idolaters of the fathers, because he lived in a corrupt age; while the deference he paid to Tertullian, the Montanist, throws suspicion over his opinions, which are masked, but not concealed, by abstaining from appeals on controverted points to his heretical master. No important use can be made of one who was so little of a theologian; though he sometimes shows how much primitive truth was retained in those later days of which he gives a character so black. Augustine, without scruple, but with much reason, controverts the decisions of the bishop of Carthage. To

none later than Cyprian have we appealed, for the subsequent part of the third century was so filled with the annals of persecution that it produced martyrs rather than authors.

After those writers whom we have reviewed, the best sources of information are the earliest translators of Scripture. These are, indeed, fathers by eminence; for there were but few who could produce such works; and none but men of the highest reputation could have procured for their versions general adoption. The Greek church contented herself with the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament, till Origen called in the aid of other versions, which, however, were the works, not of her sons, but her foes. The New Testament she had the high and enviable advantage of receiving from heaven in her own tongue, which saved her from making here the philological blunders into which she fell in her comments on the Old.

The Syrian churches, which were the oldest, required a version of the whole body of revelation; and we cannot doubt that this first of wants was at the earliest period supplied. The tradition of an Aramæan translation of the earlier books of the Old Testament in the days of Solomon may be a fable; but, to say nothing of the Jews, as soon as there were Christians who knew no other tongue, they must have been furnished with the means of reading the ancient Scriptures in Syriac. Of the New Testament we happily possess in that language a version of the highest antiquity and worth. Whether it should be assigned to the second or third century is disputed among biblical scholars; but no sufficient reason has ever been given why we should not conclude it to have been the production of the earliest age; so as to have received the sanction of inspired men. Of its author, however, as well as of its exact date, we are ignorant. Its excellence, we might almost say its perfection, is acknowledged by every competent judge. With the luminous simplicity of the original, it

has the advantage of rendering back the ideas of our Lord and the Apostles into the very words, perhaps, which they first employed. The most moderate estimate of its date makes the Peshito a testimony, from at least one very early and highly accomplished father, to the sense in which the New Testament was then understood. The value of the Syriac in all discussions upon patristic theology, though naturally overlooked by those who know not the language, will be seen in the course of these Lectures.

Of the Latin version we have made less use; because the present Vulgate was the production of a period much later than that of which we profess to give the theological creed. Augustine would induce us to believe, that, instead of one Latin version of paramount authority, there were originally many, though the more faithful was to be preferred. We are now, however, left to gather the fragments of the ancient version from the Latin fathers; for Jerome's improvement, which at length superseded every other translation, forms the Vulgate, which is no longer depreciated by Protestants. It is, at least, a witness to the sense in which the Western Church, from the fifth century, understood the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures; and as no complaints were made of any *doctrinal* change from the older version, we may consider the testimony as applicable to an earlier period.

The ecclesiastical historians are obviously sources of information concerning the theology of the period they describe; for if even civil history is not confined to mere facts, that of the church is in a high degree a record of opinions. The suspicion of Arianism that attaches to Eusebius of Cæsariæ, as well as to his namesake of Nicomedia, renders his extracts from other writers the best parts of his history, which thus becomes equivalent to a witness of an earlier age than his own. The loss of the oldest ecclesiastical history, that of Hegesippus, is not the less to be regretted because the remaining fragments show

his want of judgment; for children often put us in possession of facts which wiser heads would have concealed.

Sulpicius Severus, who wrote near the year 400, gives a digest of the history of the world to his own days, derived from the sacred and profane records; but he is too secular, and too brief to afford much light on questions of theology. As an ecclesiastic, indeed, highly esteemed by Augustine and Jerome, we should have hearkened to him with great deference on questions of fact; though he was too deeply imbued with the superstition of the times to give to his own opinion considerable weight. He has been called the Christian Sallust, and by Joseph Scaliger pronounced the purest ecclesiastical writer. His testimony is valuable, in proportion as he professes to give the sentiments of the earlier days of the church; and his Dialogues, as well as his Life of Martin, afford a good opportunity of tracing the progress of opinion.

Jewish and heathen writers might have afforded us more light, if they had not despised Christians too much to inquire into their faith. Josephus has been strangely supposed to describe the Christians under the name of Essenes, which, if true, would give us no theological information; but his disputed testimony to our Saviour has been dismissed with too little investigation; for if the probability of his writing in that manner is to decide the question, it would be easy to show that many of his acknowledged sentences must be discarded as interpolations. Philo has been placed in the same category, but no one who knows what a Christian is would give that name to either of these learned Jews. Tacitus and Suetonius furnish hints too brief to influence any doctrinal decision; but Pliny's letter is not without its importance even in theology. The history of Herodian, confined to a period in which we feel our warrant of information, is as silent on the whole subject of Christianity as if such a religion had not then existed in the Roman world.

The apocryphal writings that have been obtruded on the church, under the names of the fathers, are numerous, but often so contemptible that it is charity to the reputation of the pretended authors to relieve them from the disgraceful imputation. Ecclesiastical more than any other history is derived, like our dreams, from such a mixture of facts with fictions that we scarcely know how to distinguish the visionary from the real. Who can pretend to an infallible clue to guide us through this labyrinth? We sometimes discover that even those who received the forgeries as genuine did not believe all their contents. Two authors who have been included in the collection of the apostolical fathers, by Cotelerius and Wake, require to be noticed so far as to give our reasons for rejecting them as unworthy of credit. Wake, indeed, introduces their works as a sacrifice of his own judgment to that of others, and Cotelerius seems ashamed of the pretences to authority that have been advanced in favour of these fables.

The first is called the Catholic Epistle of Barnabas, by Origen, who echoes the voice of his master Clement.* But the question of the canon was then undecided, and the fathers quoted notoriously apocryphal writings as ecclesiastical, if not as inspired. Eusebius places this epistle among those writings that are disputed by some, and Jerome classes it with apocryphal books.

The name *בן נביא* signifies the preacher, and should be rendered, son of exhortation, rather than consolation. The companion of Paul was a Levite of Cyprus, and probably an exhorter or reader in the Cypriot synagogue; but this epistle, which was perhaps called simply that of the preacher, for the writer does not mention his own name, was the work of a Syrian converted from heathenism in the Alexandrian school, which first brought it into notice.

* γέγραπται δὲ ἐν τῇ Βαρνάβα καθολικῇ ἐπιστολῇ. *Contra Celsum*, lib. i. p. 49.

It was evidently written after the destruction of the Jewish temple, and the writer says, "Before we believed in God, the habitation of our heart was a house full of idolatry, a house of devils," which shows he was no Levite. Coming down to us imperfect, we have of the first part only a Latin version, and the whole is such a compound of false quotation, feeble reasoning, and puerile allegory, that to ascribe it to the Levite of Cyprus is an insult to the memory of him that was called by the Holy Ghost to be the companion of an apostle; as if we supposed that, after their separation, Barnabas became fatuous. Instead of being supported by the authorities adduced, the epistle serves only to show how little their opinion was worth.

The work called the Pastor or Shepherd of Hermas was unquestionably, not the production of the Hermes mentioned by Paul in his letter to the Romans, but of a later author, supposed to be Hermes, or Hermetes, brother of Pius I., the Roman bishop in the middle of the second century. It is called the Shepherd because the second part or book contains these words, as spoken by the angel of repentance: "I am that shepherd to whose care you are delivered." But as the original Greek is lost, had the Latin version shared the same fate, we should have been spared our blushes for the folly of him that could write, and of those that could respectfully quote, what must be called, not pious, but impious forgeries. If this was an attempt to perpetuate the claim to miraculous gifts and inspiration, it succeeded, only as the modern speaking with tongues, and the revelations of the most pitiable fanatics, have had their measure of success; for mock miracles and inspiration serve but to enhance the true. Whether this Hermas were deceiver or deceived, the reception which his visions obtained gives such a view of the discernment of those times, as forbids us to wonder at any corruption that obtained, either in the doctrine or

practice of the church. The best apology that can be made for the ancients is, that in speaking of this book, they contradict at one time the eulogies they pronounce at another. Eusebius treats it as absolutely false, and Tertullian calls it the Shepherd of Adulterers.

The second epistle of Clement we have already rejected as an attempt to imitate the first, which had been excessively admired. Quotations from apocryphal gospels, render this letter suspicious; nor is there anything that passes under the name of Clement worthy of our regard, but the epistle to the Corinthians. Eusebius repudiates the second epistle.

Of the martyrdoms of Ignatius and Polycarp, the productions of a later age, it is not necessary to speak, except to remind the reader that, like the letters of Abgarus and the Acts of Pilate, they show the propensity to forgeries which was indulged by well-meaning men called primitive fathers.

From the sources now enumerated we must derive our knowledge of the theology of the early church. For though we may occasionally refer to some of a later age, they will be adduced only as evidences of the opinions of their predecessors, whose works were better known when time had not yet completed its ravages, and ecclesiastical partisanship had not succeeded in putting out of court witnesses whose testimony proclaimed the corruption of the church.

LECTURE II.

THEOLOGY OF THE EARLY CHURCH CONCERNING THE SCRIPTURES AND THE DIVINE NATURE.

THE primitive theology, as far as it can be ascertained, consists of opinions recorded in the various sources of information, on the Scriptures and tradition; the divine nature and attributes; the divinity of Christ and the Trinity; the purposes and works of God, with the creation and fall of angels and men; redemption, including the person and work of Christ; divine grace and justification; the church with its officers, and worship, and discipline; the sacraments and Christian ethics; the final fortunes of the church and the world, including death, the separate state of the soul, the resurrection, antichrist, the millenium, and the consummation of all things.

This second Lecture will show the sentiments of the ancient writers on the Scriptures, tradition, and some related points; and on the divine nature, the divinity of Christ, and the Trinity.

PART I.—*Of the Scriptures.*

The canon of Scripture so powerfully affects every part of our creed that the prevalent ignorance on the subject should excite equal surprise and regret. Both in ancient and modern times, even correct conclusions have too frequently been empirical; for their reasons and evidences have been, to a great extent, unknown. The canon of the

Old Testament, formed under the guidance of inspired prophets, and closed by Malachi, is rendered sure to us, by the sanction of our Redeemer, who always honoured it by his appeals, while he condemned the most revered traditions, for making void "the Scriptures, which cannot be broken." This code, recognized by the early fathers, was soon tampered with; for succeeding ages added to it books which never formed a part of those oracles, the custody of which, Paul declares, was the prime honour of the Jewish church. Augustine calls the Jews our porters, to carry for us the books on which Christians build their faith.* How came they, then, to be guilty of the inconsistency of receiving, as inspired, books that were never brought to us by those who are acknowledged to have been God's chosen porters? The canon of the New Testament was closed by John, the last of the apostles, as that of the Old had been by Malachi, the seal of the prophets, who charged the church to adhere to the law of Moses till Messiah came, "lest Jehovah should smite the land with a curse."† The Christian Scriptures, also, close with an aspiration for the second coming of Christ, preceded by a fearful denunciation on him who should alter, by addition or diminution, "the words of this book." It has been too hastily concluded that this adjuration affects only the Apocalypse in which it occurs; for the prohibition would, by this reasoning, be rendered void; since any pretended prophet might, by means of another book, effectually add to that called the Revelation, without incurring the curse. But if no prophecies are to be added, no inspired teachers are to be expected; for with inspiration must come the right to prophesy. Who could have the assurance to impose limitations on one supposed to

* Quid est aliud hodieque gens ipsa nisi quædam scriniaria Christianorum bajulans legem et prophetas. August. Contr. Faustum, lib. xii. c. 23.

† That they may not end the reading of the Scriptures with an execration, the Jews repeat the preceding verse.

be inspired, and say, "Thou shalt not prophesy in the name of the Lord?" John may have known of the death of the last possessor of miraculous gifts, which would most properly expire with the last of the apostles, who could pronounce an authoritative sentence on the pretensions of such as professed to speak by the special inspiration of the Spirit.

Henceforth, in the divine writings alone, we "hear what the Spirit saith to the churches." Subsequent pretences to miraculous powers we meet with in ecclesiastical history; but they are hesitating, equivocal, and suspicious. By the laying on of the hands of the apostles alone, these extraordinary gifts were originally conferred; and if we depart from this point, we know not where to stop, short of the pretences of the Romanists, or of some modern fanatics, who, at antipodes to Rome, join her in pleading for the continuance of miraculous powers and inspiration. That these were required for the introduction of a new dispensation of religion implies that they were not suited to its continuance, after it had been thus sufficiently accredited. The apostles in their writings now "sit on thrones judging the tribes of Israel," and all attempts to set up another authority are treason which covers its perpetrators with shame.

The time and occasion of the formation of the Christian canon, and its general reception in the church, are questions as difficult as they are interesting and important. That the beloved disciple, John, as the survivor of the apostles, authoritatively closed the canon has been asserted, and it may surely be pronounced the most natural hypothesis; but it is still a question of fact, at what period, and to what extent, this decision was known and prevailed among the churches. It cannot be ascertained that the apostolical fathers possessed even the gospels as early as we should have expected. For when the Roman Clement quotes the Old Testament, he says, "Thus it is

written;" but he adopts another style concerning Christian verities, saying, "Let us be mindful of the words of the Lord, teaching mildness;"* and Ignatius quotes what certainly does not exist now in either of the gospels: "Handle me and see that I am not an incorporeal dæmon."†

Luke's introduction to the Acts of the Apostles intimates that there were then extant many gospels, not of divine authority, but neither also of heretical pravity, and from some of these the early fathers appear to quote. All this must naturally have occurred. But strong suspicions are excited that Christians, satisfied of the truth of those things which the apostles preached, were negligent of the canon. Ignatius, indeed, is supposed to refer to the Christian code,* in a passage that has been tortured by various translations and interpretations: "Since I have heard some saying, that if I find not in the archives, (or in the ancient Scriptures,) I do not believe it is in the gospel. And I saying to them that it is written; they answered me that it lies open.‡ To me Jesus Christ is the archives: the unchangeable archives are his cross, and death, and resurrection, and faith by him, by which I desire to be justified through your prayers." The heretics seem to have charged the church with teaching things not written; but Ignatius answers, "It is written." They either reply, "The writings we quote lie open to the public," or they ask, "Is the writing to which the church appeals thus public?" for the passage is obscure, and, perhaps, corrupt. But the final answer of Ignatius is, that the *doctrine* of the death and resurrection of Christ is to him instead of all public documents. In the same strain he said to the Philadelphians,§ "Fleeing to the gospel, as to the flesh of Jesus, and to the Apostles, as to the presbytery of the

* Chap. xiii. 1 Epist.

† οὐκ εἰμί δαιμόνιον ἀσώματον. Ep. to Smyrn., c. 3.

‡ πρόκειται. Ad. Philadelph. c. 8.

§ Προσφυγὼν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ ὡς σαρκὶ Ἰησοῦ καὶ τοῖς ἀποστόλοις ὡς πρεσβυτερίῳ ἐκκλησίας, cap. 5.

church; and let us love the prophets." Here he mentions the gospel as the good news which the church had heard; but if he intended written history of Christ, he mentions but one. He also speaks of the apostles as if he referred to their preaching; otherwise, would he not have mentioned their epistles? Polycarp also says, "Let us serve Christ, with fear and all piety, as he himself *commanded*, and the apostles and prophets who preached before the coming of our Lord."* The presbyters were regarded as *living* archives whose grand duty it was to preserve uncorrupt the gospel first delivered by the apostles' preaching.

But when, in the second century, Marcion, after his teacher Cerdo, had appealed to Scripture, the fathers were roused to the discharge of a sacred duty, to form or to procure a collection of the sacred writings, first of the gospels, (and to that of Luke was appended the Acts,) and afterwards of the apostolical epistles, which were followed by the Revelation. Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Origen, Tertullian, then begin to speak a different language, referring to the four gospels and to the epistles, not omitting the mention of the Revelation. In this, as well as other instances, the heretics served the cause of truth which they laboured to destroy.†

The canon, or list of the sacred books that form what was called the ecclesiastical rule, is generally said to have been settled at the Council of Laodicæa, about the year 363, which would throw doubt and uncertainty over the doctrine of previous ages; whose theologians must have derived their instructions from an inspired code not yet ascertained. If it be said, "We may at least trust them when they appeal to the books which the council afterwards pronounced divine," we reply, that the interpretation even of these was modified by deference to others, which

* Ep. c. 6.

† This subject is ably discussed by Campegius Vitringa, the worthy son of a justly celebrated father. *Dissertationes Sacræ*, edited by Venema, Franquer, 1731.

were finally declared to be uncanonical. But the Laodicean council, which was provincial rather than universal, of uncertain date, and charged with Arianism, merely declared what the churches had already received; showing that previous quotations from uncanonical books were but appeals to private opinion, unsanctioned by the general voice of the church.

Melito, bishop in Sardis, who travelled into Palestine to obtain information * concerning the Scriptures, gives the same list of books of the Old Testament as we have in the Hebrew, including Lamentations in the prophecies of Jeremiah, and under Esdras or Ezra classing also Nehemiah and Esther. Some have represented Melito as adding the apocryphal book of Wisdom; but Valesius,† or Valois, has shown that, instead of *Proverbs and Wisdom*, we should read, “Proverbs, which is Wisdom,” for, by the name of the apocryphal the fathers often call the canonical book, which has misled some, especially as the apocryphal book of Wisdom is often quoted.

The historian affirms, that “Hegesippus, Irenæus, and the whole choir of the ancients, call the Proverbs of Solomon, Wisdom full of all virtue.”‡ Eusebius gives also, from Origen, § a list of the books of the Old Testament, which the latter says, “are twenty-two, according to the number of the Hebrew letters.” But he changes the order, and Eusebius, omitting the twelve minor prophets, which usually form a single book, gives but twenty-one. In both these lists, the Song of Songs which is Solomon’s, is distinctly mentioned, and Esther also. The Septuagint version which the early church adopted, becomes a witness to its views of the contents of the Old Testament.¶

* Euseb. Ecc. Hist. lib. iv. c. 26. † ἡδε σοφία Valesius’ Notes to Euseb.

‡ Lib. iv. c. 22.

§ Euseb. Ecc. Hist. book vi. ch. 25.

¶ As Origen is shown by Eusebius (Ecc. Hist. lib. vi. c. 19) to make the canonical books of the Old Testament two-and-twenty, according to the number of the Hebrew letters, so Cyril of Jerusalem, in the fourth century, says, (Cat. iv.,) “Read these two-and-twenty books; but have nothing to do with the apocryphal ones.”

The canon of the New Testament is joined by Eusebius to that of the Old, in his statement of Origen's views, whose words are thus reported: "I have learned by tradition concerning the four gospels which alone are received, without dispute, by the whole church of God under heaven." He then mentions Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; and adds, "Paul, who was made an able minister of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit, who fully preached the gospel from Jerusalem round about to Illyricum, did not write to all the churches he had taught; and to those to whom he did write he sent but a few lines,"—i. e. written with his own hand. "Peter, on whom the church of Christ is built, has left one acknowledged epistle. It may be granted he wrote a second, though it is doubted. What need I speak of John, who left us one gospel, saying, he could have written so many that the world could not have contained them? He wrote also the Revelation, and left an epistle of a very few lines. Grant also a second and a third, for not every one admits these as genuine." Of the Epistle to the Hebrews, he says, "If any church receive this epistle as Paul's, it is to be commended. Some say that Clement, who was bishop of Rome, wrote this epistle; others that it was Luke, who wrote the Gospel and the Acts."*

Eusebius says, "What is called the First Epistle of Peter is acknowledged; but what is taken for his Second we have learned not to belong to the New Testament, but, appearing to many to be useful, it is studied with the other Scriptures."† "But Paul's Epistles are well known to be fourteen; that some, however, reject the one to the Hebrews, because the church of the Romans deny that it is Paul's, we ought to know."‡

The conclusion to which Eusebius comes is as follows:—

"The summary of the books of the New Testament

* Euseb. Ecc. Hist. lib. vi. cap. 25.

† Ibid. lib. iii. cap. 3.

‡ Ibid.

may be here given:—first, the sacred quaternion of the Gospels; the Acts of the Apostles follow; afterwards must be reckoned the Epistles of Paul; then the First of John, and also the genuine Epistle of Peter; to these should be joined, if it seem good, the Revelation of John. These are acknowledged.

“But of those that are questioned (acknowledged, however, by many), are what is called the Epistle of James, and that of Jude, the Second Epistle of Peter, and those named the Second and Third of John, whether the evangelist or some other of the same name.”*

Justin Martyr informs us, that “the memoranda of the apostles were read in public worship along with the writings of the prophets.”† He refers to the Gospels of Matthew and John, as “composed by apostles,” and to those of Mark and Luke, as “written by followers or companions.” Irenæus says,‡ “Matthew, among the Hebrews, gave the history of the gospel written in their own tongue, while Peter and Paul were preaching the gospel and founding the church at Rome. After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, delivered to us in writing such things as he heard Peter preach. Luke, the attendant of Paul, comprised in a volume the gospel preached by him. Then John, the disciple of the Lord, who had leaned on his breast, living at Ephesus, in Asia, himself also sent forth the gospel.”

Irenæus, as Eusebius observes,§ “reasons of the Revelation of John, and the calculation of antichrist’s name, observing that the Revelation was not seen long ago, but nearly in our time, about the end of Domitian’s reign. He mentions the First Epistle of John, and the First of Peter.”

Clement of Alexandria, quoting certain words, says,

* Euseb. Ecc. Hist. lib. iii. cap. 25.

† *Apologia prima*, p. 97, Thirlby; 98 Paris.

‡ *Adversus Hæreses*, lib. iii. cap. 1.

§ Euseb. Ecc. Hist. lib. v. cap. 8.

"These we have not in the four gospels delivered to us."* Tertullian thus writes, "Christ made the apostles teachers. Of the apostles, John and Matthew introduce us to the faith; of the apostolical men, Luke and Mark strengthen it."†

The Acts of the Apostles are, after the gospels, quoted by Tertullian, as "apostolical instruments that testify a resurrection:" he then quotes Paul's words, "Touching the resurrection I am questioned."

We have seen that the epistles of Paul were, by Origen, reckoned fourteen. His master Clement mentions "Paul in the Epistles apparently not reproving philosophy,‡ and writing to the *Hebrews* who were turning from faith," which assigns to Paul the epistle necessary to make up the fourteen; though it was, long after, ascribed to others, and rejected by the Romans.

The earliest church had, generally speaking, the same views of the canon of Scripture, after it was completed by the Apocalypse, as are now entertained by Protestants; though the distinction between the inspired books and those which were merely revered as the productions of eminent men was not duly maintained. The fatal consequences are a warning to us against that imitation of their error, the binding up of the Apocrypha with the Bible. But the testimony of the earliest writers to the books of the New Testament has been so thoroughly and ably discussed by Lardner, in his invaluable work on the Credibility of the Gospel History, that it is not necessary to say more on this theme. Every allusive expression in the fathers he has quoted, but without sufficient allowance for those which may have referred to the preaching rather than the writing of the apostles, and without duly marking the increased appeals to the latter as the march of time made Christians better acquainted with the canon.

* Strom. iii. p. 339.

† Advers. Marcion, lib. iv. c. 2.

‡ Strom. p. 465.

That the church was so remiss and so late in settling this question was one of its earliest and most serious faults. There was no sufficient reason for deferring it to the time of the Council of Laodiceæ, when they had no better opportunities for coming to a just decision than had been enjoyed for years, not to say ages, before. But if they were then not in a better position, they were in a worse; for the witnesses to the origin of the sacred books had been long dead, and the apocryphal writings had gained a footing, or, as Tertullian would say, had acquired prescription, and the minds of the faithful had been bewildered by the intermixture of the true and the false.

This negligence was, indeed, unfaithfulness, which brought its own punishment; for it contributed to render the second century the age of heretics, who availed themselves of spurious writings to support their fanatical errors. In proportion as the genuine books were ascertained and placed in full day, the forgeries, unable to endure the comparison, sunk into the oblivion, or the contempt, they deserved. But while we have argued on the ordinary assumption that the Council of Laodiceæ settled the canon, that was by no means a certain and important event; for the obscure and doubtful conclave seems to have left out of the reckoning the Revelation; and, long after that era, the principal writers show that they differed in opinion on the inspired and uninspired books.

That the Syriac, called Peshito, does not contain the book of Revelation may have arisen from the version having been made before the last portion of the New Testament was given to the church.*

* Augustine recommends to a disciple "the reading of the Scriptures, even if they are not understood; but those which are called canonical. For when instructed by a belief of the truth, he may more safely read the others, lest they preoccupy a feeble mind, and by dangerous lies and visions produce some prejudice against sound knowledge. But in the canonical Scriptures let him follow the authority of the Catholic churches, among which are those which have merited to receive the apostolic sees and epistles

What is called the Apocrypha must always share in any uncertainty that may attend the canon. While some of the inspired books were questioned, they were thrown along with spurious writings into the class of works to be read for edification, especially by the Catechumens. But the indefinite term apocryphal was generally applied to such as are to this day rejected.

The early church erred by additions to the Old Testament. Clemens Alexandrinus places after Esther the Maccabæic books, without any note of distinction.* Of Tobit he speaks thus:—"Tobias, through the angel Raphael, marries Sarah, the demon having taken off her seven former bridegrooms; and after the marriage of Tobias, his father, Tobit is restored to sight."† Baruch, also, he calls "a divine writing."

He quotes the Apocrypha in the following passage:—"Divine wisdom speaks concerning the martyrs: 'They seemed in the eyes of fools to die, and their departure was reckoned a calamity, and their removal from us distressing. But they are in peace; for even though in the sight of men they are punished, their hope is full of immortality.'‡

Those which are received by all Catholic churches he will prefer to those that are received only by more and better. Those which are received of fewer and inferior are of less authority." He then gives, in the canon of the Old Testament, Tobit, and Judith, and the two Maccabees, and two Ezras, speaking doubtfully of Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus. The New Testament canon is the same as ours. Here we see how the Jews, to whom were committed the Hebrew Scriptures, are forsaken as an authority, while Melito had wisely followed them; and the Christians had come to a right conclusion on the second part of Divine revelation, which had been committed to their care. But the uncertainty of the church is worthy of remark, as also the manner in which Augustine speaks of Catholic churches in the plural. He closes by observing, that "in those things that are openly laid down in Scripture they find all that pertains to faith and practice; and that where the variety of the Latin copies creates embarrassment, a knowledge of Greek and Hebrew is necessary, that we may appeal to the originals." To the churches, and not to the Council of Laodiceæ, Augustine deferred.—*De Doctrina Christiana*, lib. ii.

* Strom. i. 241.

† Clem. Alex. Strom. iv. p. 375.

Origen and Tertullian appeal to the Story of Susanna as genuine.*

The Alexandrian, according to Eusebius, quoted not only the inspired Scripture, but also books that were disputed; the book called the Wisdom of Solomon, and Jesus the son of Syrach, the Epistle to the Hebrews, Barnabas, Clement, Jude.† Here is a strange mixture, from which nothing certain can be concluded, but that Clement was ignorant on the vital question of the canon, and Eusebius undecided.

The second apocryphal book of Esdras is supposed to be the work of some Christian, who, perhaps, never expected it to be taken for inspired Scripture, though he has audaciously imitated the style of the inspiring Spirit—"Thus saith the Lord." The Council of Trent consummated the iniquity of the Roman church by mixing up inspired and uninspired writings, attempting to give divine authority to this confusion of tongues. To exalt the church above the Scriptures she contends that the church determines what is inspired. Rome has, however, contradicted the church, by receiving into the canon of the Old Testament, books unknown to the Jewish church, to which the Old Testament was entrusted, and whose canon, sanctioned by our Lord, was adopted by the Council of Laodicæa.

The apocryphal books appended to the *New Testament* the apostolical fathers do not quote; but Justin Martyr has been supposed to derive from a spurious gospel, that "a great light shone round Christ when he was baptized." He may, however, have given this merely from current report. There is also no sufficient evidence that Irenæus quotes as inspired Scripture any other than the canonical books of the New Testament. The public reading of the Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians is not a proof that

* Tert. de Corona, c. 4.

† Euseb. Ecc. Hist. book vi. ch. 13.

it was deemed canonical, any more than the reading of the Missal and the Anglican Liturgy could prove that these were supposed to belong to the canon.

Of the apocryphal writings of Christians, the Epistle of Abgarus, prince of Edessa, and our Saviour's Answer, were the commencement; and though Eusebius professes to have translated them from the Syrian records, the impudent forgeries serve only to destroy our faith in the historian's critical discernment. He informs us, however, that Hegesippus, speaking of what are called the apocryphal books, relates that some of them were composed in his time by certain heretics.*

When Clement calls Barnabas an apostle, he does but quote Scripture,† for the word, being ordinarily employed for a messenger, is sometimes used in that general way, as when Christ is called "the apostle of our profession," and not always for the twelve, or the apostles by emphasis. Tertullian speaks of the seventy as apostles, in addition to the twelve,‡ and the word appears to be applied to what are usually called apostolic men. Clement is thought in one instance to have contradicted Barnabas; so that he who quotes him as an apostle, yet deemed him not inspired. In another place, the Alexandrian says the apostolic Barnabas, who was one of the seventy.§ Clement also quotes him whom he naturally terms the elder or greater Clement, saying, "The Apostle Clement, in the Epistle to the Corinthians;"|| for so loosely was the word employed that bishops were called apostles. But it is not easy to apologize for the following passages:—"Divinely, therefore, that power which speaks to Hermas by Revelation, ¶ says;" "The shepherd, also, the angel of

* Lib. iv. ch. 22.

† Acts xiv. 14, "The Apostles Barnabas and Saul."

‡ Adversus Marcion, lib. iv. cap. 24.

§ Strom. ii. p. 300.

|| Strom. iv. p. 376.

¶ Strom. i.

Repentance, speaks to Hermas concerning false prophets."* The spurious book seems to be put on a level with those that were divinely inspired; nor can it be denied that the distinction is but faintly preserved, by, at least, some of the early fathers.

Clement quotes Matthias, in traditions exhorting, "admire present things, affirming that this is the first step of further knowledge." He adds also a quotation from the gospel according to the Hebrews, which is not worthy to be repeated.†

From the gospel according to the Egyptians, he learned that when Salome asked the Lord how long iniquity should prevail, he replied, "As long as you women bear children."‡

Tertullian sets the epistle of Barnabas in opposition to the Shepherd of Hermas, saying, "The Epistle is more received among the churches than that apocryphal Shepherd of Adulterers."§

Origen has in his voluminous writings quoted various apocryphal works, but he has so clearly declared what is divine, that we should give him the advantage of the apologies made for him, by those who observe that he employs different phrases when he appeals to other authorities. We cannot, however, excuse his attempt to defend the Story of Susanna against the attacks which show that it was not generally received by Christians as divine Scripture.

Cyprian quotes the Apocrypha—for instance, the first book of Maccabees—as divine Scripture;|| and cites the Wisdom of Solomon in the same way. Repeating the words of Ecclesiasticus, he says, "As the Lord has spoken by his prophet." In like manner he speaks of Baruch, affirming that the Holy Spirit, by Jeremiah, has suggested

* Strom. i. p. 261.

† Strom. ii. p. 278.

‡ Strom. iii. p. 333.

§ De Pudicitia, c. 20.

|| Ep. to Cornelius, 55.

these things. Cyprian therefore had no correct knowledge of the canon.

The great sin of the fathers lay in want of due respect for the accuracy of truth, especially in its application to the distinction between genuine Scripture and forgeries. The Acts of Paul and Thecla, of which Tertullian declares that an Asiatic presbyter avowed himself the author, out of love to the apostle,* is quoted respectfully by Cyprian and by subsequent fathers. The confession of the forgery scarcely affected the currency of the work. When, therefore, we find Tertullian attempting to exalt the Book of Enoch to a place in the canon, we are not quite sure that he believed his own argument. Such as it was, we give it: "I know that the Scripture or writing of Enoch, which has given this angelic order, is not received by some; because it was not received into the Jewish depository. I conclude that they cannot think that what was edited before the deluge could have been saved after that catastrophe of the world that destroyed everything. If that is the reason, let them remember that the grandson of Enoch, Noah, survived the deluge, who, therefore, by that domestic name and hereditary tradition, had heard and remembered of the favour of his grandfather in the sight of God, and all his preaching. For Enoch committed to his son, Methuselah, nothing but what he should deliver the knowledge of to his posterity. Therefore Noah might, without doubt, have succeeded in the delegation of preaching; even because he would not conceal the dispensation of the God who had preserved him, concerning the glory of his own house. If he had not this so ready at hand, that also would guard the assertion of this Scripture or prove its genuineness. So the very violence of the deluge might again have restored to his spirit the remembrance of what had become faint. Just also, as at the destruction of Jerusalem, in the Babylonish siege, it appears that every record of Jewish

* For this it should be known that the presbyter was deposed.

literature was restored by Ezra. But since Enoch, in the same Scripture, also, preached concerning the Lord; by us, indeed, nothing is entirely to be rejected which pertains to us; and we read, "All Scripture fit for edification is divinely inspired; by the Jews now it seems to have been afterwards rejected for the same reason as most other things which speak of Christ. Nor is this wonderful, if they have not received certain Scriptures which speak of him whom they would not receive when he was himself speaking before them."*

This most pernicious piece of patristic theology demands our criticism. The author censures those who rejected the Book of Enoch, because it was not in the Jew's armarium or depository of Scripture. It appears, therefore, that the true principle of the canon of the Old Testament was known by him and despised. Had he not read that to the Jews "were entrusted the oracles of God?" Was he not aware that our Lord always appealed to their Scriptures as that which cannot be broken and which testified of him? Did Christ ever accuse them of corrupting or rejecting any part of the word of God? Has not Tertullian, by this argumentation, attempted to shake the authority of the Old Testament to its foundation? For if the Jewish canon has been formed by the disposition of a people that hated Christ, what confidence can we repose in either their admission or their rejection of any book?

But Tertullian forgot that when it was determined what should be admitted into the Jewish armarium, the church of God was as truly among them as it is now among Christians. The ancient church no more hated Christ than does the modern; and when the Jews rejected him, it was no longer in their power to alter their canon. It had been determined and proclaimed to the world, and the Greek translation had become an additional testimony to the Hebrew originals. We pass over his argument in favour

* *De habitu muliebri*, c. 3.

of the preservation of an antediluvian book which no one treats as anything but a forgery.

Our censure must now be directed to his sweeping assertion, that the Jewish Scriptures were destroyed in the Babylonish captivity, and restored by Ezra. In this folly, other fathers countenance Tertullian; for while professing to despise the Jews too much to admit their testimony to the canon of the Old Testament, the worst Jewish fables were by Christians implicitly received. It is not, however, certain that even the Jews went further than to say that Ezra was a second Moses; and if the latter had not written the law, the former was worthy to have enjoyed that honour. But how a Christian of any ability could have believed that the whole of the Jewish records were destroyed, and that Ezra was inspired to write them all over again, we cannot conceive. Did not Septimius know that Daniel read the sacred books in Babylon, before Ezra was called to public service?

But while we say nothing of Tertullian's translation of the words of Paul,* which makes usefulness a proof of inspiration, we ask what must be the state of that mind which would make the edifying tendency of the book of Enoch an evidence of its inspiration? For Tertullian claims for it no smaller honour. Is everything that "pertains to Christians," and is fitted to edify them, divinely inspired? Would this father claim the honours of inspiration for his own writings, which he, doubtless, thought pertained to Christians, and fit to edify them?

He speaks of the Jews as "rejecting the book of Enoch, as they did almost all other things that speak of Christ." Did Septimius suppose they rejected the book of Psalms and the prophets? Or was he ignorant that Christ appealed to these and showed how they spake of him? When Tertullian says, it is not wonderful that they who rejected Christ speaking to them should reject Scriptures that

* 2 Tim. iii. 15—17.

speak of him, he shows that he made no proper distinction between the ancient church under the guidance of inspired prophets, and a nation from whom the kingdom of God was passing away to be transferred to others.

That we have now the true canon of the New Testament we owe rather to the purifying processes of a wonderful providence than to the wisdom of the first ages. For if they bear valuable witness, it is incidentally; while they often intentionally violate the principles of the canon in various ways. The churches were, doubtless, the conservative parties; and as the autographs of the various books were deposited with them, these *authenticæ litteræ* (to use Tertullian's words, if not in his sense) became at last universally known, and the forgeries generally disappeared. Happily for the Christian Church, it contained wiser and better men than many of the authors whose works have escaped the ravages of time. Those whom the *literati* would have misled were preserved by the fulfilment of the promise, "All thy children shall be taught of God." Particular churches preserved the records which the universal church at length received.

The authority ascribed to the written word by the early fathers is, on many accounts, a question that demands our special regard. Clement praises the Corinthians for carefully attending to the words of God:* "Take the epistle of the blessed Paul the apostle. What did he first write to you in the beginning of the gospel?† Look into the Holy Scriptures, which are the true words of the Holy Ghost. Ye know there is nothing unjust or counterfeit written in them."‡ "For ye know and well understand the sacred Scriptures, and have searched into the oracles of God."§

Ignatius writes to the Magnesians,|| "Be diligent, therefore, to be confirmed in the doctrines of the Lord and his

* To Corinth. chap. ii.

+ chap. 47.

† To Corinth. chap. 45.

§ chap. 53.

|| chap. 13.

apostle, that ye may prosper ; " and to the Romans, " Not as Peter and Paul do I order you."*

The estimation in which the inspired writers were held by Polycarp appears in his letter to the Philippians ; " Neither I nor any other like me, can come up to the wisdom of the blessed and glorious Paul, who, being among you, taught accurately and soundly the word of truth ; who also, being absent, wrote to you letters, to which, if you bend your attention, you will be able to build yourselves up in the faith given to you."†

Justin Martyr quotes largely the preaching of Christ, and says to the strangers, " Be it known to you, that whatever we say, we have learned from Christ, and the prophets that were before him ; these things alone are true, and older than other writers. For there were among the Jews certain men, prophets of God, by whom the prophetic spirit told beforehand what would come to pass."‡

Justin leads us to one still more ancient, his own spiritual father, the venerable old Christian, who could not have been far from the apostles' days, and who conducted the martyr to the Saviour, by such advice as Justin has here recorded : " But pray, above all things, that the gates of light may be opened to you. For these things are not discerned or understood by all, but by him to whom God and his Christ grant to know them." " Immediately a fire was kindled in my soul," says Justin, " and a love of the prophets and of the friends of Christ seized me."§

Theophilus of Antioch says,—" I believe, in consequence of meeting with the Scriptures of the holy prophets who foretold things as they happened, being taught by the Spirit."||

* To Corinth. chap. 4.

† Dial. 225.

+ Polycarp to Philippians, chap. 3.

§ Dial. with Trypho, 225 Thirlby.

|| To Autolychnus, lib. ii. ad fin.

Irenæus observes, that "We have not known the dispensation of our salvation, by any others than those by whom the gospel has come to us, which indeed they then preached and afterwards, by the will of God, delivered to us in the Scriptures, the future foundation and pillar of our faith. For it must not be said that they preached before they had a perfect knowledge, as some dare to affirm, glorying that they are correctors of the apostles. But after our Lord had risen from the dead, and they were endued with the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon them from on high, they were filled with all (gifts), and had perfect knowledge; they went forth to the ends of the earth."* The sufficiency of the gospels he maintains by the following arguments, we cannot call them reasons: "Nor can there be more or fewer gospels; for, as there are four regions in the world, and four principal spirits, and the church is spread all over the earth, and the gospel is the pillar and foundation of the church, and the spirit of life, it consequently has four pillars, breathing on all sides incorruptibility, and quickening men, whence it is manifest that the Word, the former of all things, who sits upon the cherubim and upholds all things, having appeared to men, has given us a gospel of a fourfold character, but joined in one spirit."†

He says, "I have heard from a certain presbyter (supposed to be Papias) who had heard from those who saw the apostles, and learned of them that to the ancients the reproof given in the Scriptures to those who did things without the council of the Spirit, was sufficient. Thus we are not to censure them, further than by following the Scriptures.

"Well knowing that the Scriptures are perfect, as being dictated by the Word of God and his Spirit; that a heavy punishment awaits those who add to, or take from, the Scriptures; we, following the one and only God as our

* *Advers. Heres.* lib. iii. c. 1.

† *Lib.* iii. c. 11.

teacher, and having his words as a rule of faith, do always speak the same things concerning the same things. A sound mind, that is, sober, discreet, and a lover of truth, whatever God has put in the power of men, and made knowable by us, these such a mind will study, and improve in them, rendering the knowledge of them easy by daily exercise. And the things which we may know are those which fall under our sight, and whatever are plainly, and clearly, and expressly spoken in the divine Scriptures. Such a one will be well satisfied of these things if he also diligently read the Scriptures, with those who are presbyters of the church, with whom is the apostolic doctrine as we have shown." This last counsel is wise, and would be approved by real Protestants, for ministers were designed to assist the faithful in the study of the Scriptures.

Clement of Alexandria affirms, "We are taught of God who have been instructed by the Son of God in the truly sacred Scriptures."* The apostle, knowing this instruction to be truly divine, says, "Thou, O Timothy, hast known from a child the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise to salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus."

The apostle calls them divinely inspired, being profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for education in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, fitted for every good work.† "On this account" (that we might be justified by faith) "the Scriptures are interpreted (*i. e.* translated) in the language of the Greeks, that they might never be able to plead ignorance as an excuse, since they can hear them from us, if they are but willing.‡

Origen, the disciple of the former, tells Celsus that,

* Θεοδιδάκτοι γὰρ ἡμεῖς ἱερὰ ὄντως γράμματα παρὰ τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ Θεοῦ παιδευόμενοι.
—Strom. i. 233.

† Admon. ad Gentes, 41.

‡ διὰ τοῦτο γὰρ Ἑλλήνων φωνῇ ἐρμηνεύθησαν αἱ γραφαὶ ὥς μὴ πρόφασιν ἀγνοίας προβάλλεσθαι. Cl. Alex. Strom. i. 211.

“with his leave, he will venture to affirm, that the disciples of Jesus, after their understandings were enlightened by the grace of God, knew better than Plato what to write, and how to write, and what things were fit to be published to the world, either by the voice or writing.* But that our religion would have us to be wise is demonstrable, both from the ancient, that is, the Jewish Scriptures, which also we use, no less than from the Scriptures which are since (the time of) Jesus, and are believed in the churches to be divine.”† To something that Celsus had put into the mouth of a Christian, Origen replies, “It is not in any private books, or read also by a few lovers of learning, but in the popular works it is written, the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen.”‡ Here the Epistle to the Romans, which contains the things deemed most profound and difficult, is pronounced *δημοδαιστερος* or more popular, in opposition to what is studied only by the learned.

Tertullian says to Hermogenes, “Whether all things were made of subject matter I never yet read. Let the shop of Hermogenes show where it is written. If it be not written, let him fear that woe that is destined for those who add anything to the Word of God, or take anything away.” The sufficiency of Scripture is maintained with a high hand, when he says, “it denies what it does not denote;”§ and when he exclaims, “I adore the fulness of the Scripture.”||

The chief excellence of the fathers lies in their copious quotations of Scripture, and the best sentences in all the volume of the Alexandrian Clement are that in which he says the Scriptures were put into the vulgar tongue of the Greeks, that there might be no excuse for ignorance; and

* Book vi. 279.

† Lib. iii. 138.

‡ Lib. vii.

§ “Negat Scriptura quod non notat.”—De Monogamia, c. 4.

|| “Adoro Scripturæ plenitudinem. Scriptum esse doceat Hermogenis officina. Si non est Scriptum, timeat vix illud adjicientibus aut detrahentibus destinatum.”—Advers. Hermog. 22, c.

another which declares that truth is to be found, by confirming what is demonstrated by Scripture out of like Scriptures.

We have enlarged on this part of the theology of the fathers, because it is not only the best, but virtually includes everything; for if we hearken to them here, where they are most copious, most positive, and most harmonious, we must derive our theology from the study of the Word of God, comparing Scripture with Scripture.*

The communion, which prides itself on deference to the fathers, has laboured assiduously to neutralize their finest passages on the sufficiency of Scripture, by insisting that it must be interpreted to us by the fathers themselves. Now, they set up no such claim; so that he who does this for them violates his own doctrine by the very act of asserting it. Nor is he a friend, but the bitterest foe, to the reputation of the fathers who provokes an investigation into their claim to deference as authoritative interpreters of Scripture; for never do they appear to greater disadvantage than in the department of exegesis. Allegory, without authority and without rule, is their universal favourite. The allegorizing of Scripture began early, and became rampant. Clement says to the Corinthians,—“In addition they (the spies sent by Joshua) gave her, that is, Rahab, a sign, that she should hang from her house a scarlet line, making it manifest that through the blood of the Lord there should be redemption for all that believe and hope in God. See, beloved, there was not only faith, but prophecy in the woman.”† This was a favourite con-

* Sulpicius Severus, speaking of the sacred volumes, in the very commencement of his history, says, that the whole mystery of divine things can be derived only from the fountains themselves. This might be supposed to mean the original Hebrew and Greek, though Vorstius, his editor, asserts, “That the Latin or any other version is intended by the fountains, and that when Severus refers to the Hebrew and Greek, he calls them the originals, rather than the fountains.” p. 4.

† Cfr. xii. οὐ μόνον πίστις ἀλλὰ προφητεία ἐν τῇ γυναίκει.

ceit with the fathers, who have overlooked much better proof of the same doctrine.

Clement the elder introduces Deut. xxxii. 15, which the Septuagint has strangely paraphrased, rather than translated; and he adds to the confusion by giving us what is not found in either the Hebrew or the present Greek:—“That was fulfilled which is written, The beloved ate, and drank, and was enlarged, and grew fat,” &c.* In the same manner he says of Enoch,—“His death was not found;”† to which there is nothing correspondent in the original,‡ or the Greek version.

With few exceptions beside that splendid one, Origen, the fathers, till Jerome's days, laboured under the serious disadvantage of being ignorant of Hebrew; so that the earliest Latin version of the Old Testament was probably a translation of a translation. An humbling sense of dependence on the Septuagint seems to have led to the adoption of the fable, that it was made by inspiration, which caused seventy-two separate translators to agree to a letter.§ As the Jews have abandoned this version, so the fable was practically scorned, not only by Origen in his Hexapla, but also by the church, which adopted Jerome's translation from the original Hebrew. Tertulian hints that the inspiration of the Septuagint was a Jewish tale,|| and yet strangely adopts it. Justin, Irenæus, Epiphanius, Augustine, ascribe inspiration to this translation, by which they ruin their own authority as interpreters of Scripture, often building arguments on what is not in the Hebrew. Sometimes they add injustice to folly, by falsely accusing the Jews of corrupting their Scriptures.¶ Origen's effort to improve upon the Septuagint became the innocent occasion of increased confusion; for various versions are now in some places manifestly mingled in one.

* Chap. iii.

+ 1 Cor. ix.

‡ Ad. Cor. c. ix.; Gen. v. 24.

§ Iren. lib. iii. c. 25.

|| Apolog. c. 18.

¶ Dial. with Trypho.

The principles of interpretation adopted by the fathers come out distinctly to view in the writings of Origen, who avowed a threefold method—historical, allegorical, and mystical, or ethical; though it is not easy to discover that he kept these distinct. He was not, however, the author of the allegorical method, which appears not only in the writings of his master, Clement, but as early as the days of the Roman of that name. We have heard Irenæus argue that there could be no more than four gospels, because there were four quarters of the heavens—east, west, north, and south; and the cherubim on the ark had four faces—of a man, a lion, an eagle, and an ox. As interpreters of Scripture, then, so far from being oracles, even the wisest of the fathers often astonish us by their puerile absurdities; and no public instructor who has any credit to maintain would venture to adopt, as his own, the comments he might defend by an appeal to their concurrent testimony. If of this we have not adduced more numerous proofs, it is because the fact will come out to view in quotations on other points, and the truth is admitted by all who have either learning or sense to which we could appeal.

Tradition is so associated with the Scriptures, in the language, at least, if not in the minds, of the fathers, that it becomes necessary to consider this most complicated theme. The word, like many others, has in the course of ages acquired different senses, and that which obtained before the canon of Scripture was complete, became, at length, far remote from the sense now adopted and cherished by the votaries of Rome. In the epistle of Paul it signifies, according to its true etymology, whatever is *handed down* to us, “whether by word or by epistle.” In this sense, therefore, tradition includes Scripture. From Eusebius we learn, “that Ignatius exhorted the churches through which he passed to hold the tradition of the apostles which he thought necessary, as a faithful witness,

to express in writing as a type, or to give the form of it in writing.”* At the time when the Scriptures had not obtained universal circulation, this counsel was good, and Ignatius, by his conduct, destroyed the credit of unwritten traditions; since he deemed it the duty of a faithful witness to commit to writing what he knew. Polycarp commends to the Philippians the letters of Paul, written to themselves, that they might hand THEM down to others. The diligence of Papias in inquiring after traditions seems to apply only to historical affairs; and his declared want of judgment to make a proper use of what he learned is a recorded testimony to the doubtful credit of things that come only from such a source. Hegesippus, a similar character, was so little valued by the earliest churches that they have allowed his whole collections to perish. Justin appeals, not to tradition, but to the Scriptures alone. After this time, which is the most important in the whole controversy, the orthodox suffered themselves to be driven by the heretics to take on this point, as on some others, a false position.

By tradition, then, the earliest fathers seem to have meant, as the apostles did, mere handing down, including the books of Scripture† themselves, and the report, or testimony, that they came from the apostles as inspired authoritative teachers of the church. Irenæus treats tradition as the refuge of the heretics, who say, “The truth cannot be learned from Scripture by those who are ignorant of tradition.” He replies,—“When we challenge them to come to the tradition from the apostles, preserved by the succession of the presbyters in the churches, they oppose tradition, saying, they are wiser than apostles, who mixed up legal things with the words of the Saviour.”‡ Tradition here was what had come down from the apostles, *i. e.*, the inspiration and authority of Scripture. The

* Euseb. iii. 36.

+ 2 Thess. ii. 15.

† Advers. Hæres. lib. iii. c. 2.

heretics, then, first appealed to tradition, pretending to have received information, that the Scriptures, being no infallible guide, were to be corrected from some higher source of wisdom, to which the orthodox opposed the tradition which had come to them, by a succession of presbyters in the churches, that the Scriptures were pure authoritative truth. This is the doctrine of Irenæus, called the first writer on tradition. The heretics, therefore, are said to consent, neither to the Scriptures, nor to tradition; not that these were two concurrent authorities, but they, by denying the tradition which has come to all Christians, denied the inspiration of Scripture. No one would suppose that unwritten revelations were here intended; for instead of pleading for co-ordinate authority, Irenæus contends for the sole authority of Scripture, against those who thought *they* had some other revelation by which they might correct Scripture.

"When the heretics are convicted from the Scriptures, they turn," says Irenæus, "to accusations of the Scriptures themselves; as that they are not correct, and are not from authority, and because they are variously expressed, and because the truth cannot from these be found by such as are ignorant of tradition."* Had we not been informed that this was the language of ancient heretics, we should have thought that we were listening to a Jesuit arguing against Scripture, in order to establish the authority of unwritten traditions.

Cyprian tells us we should have recourse to the fountain, whenever the stream of doctrine that runs down the channel of ecclesiastical tradition is found to be corrupted;† so that, instead of interpreting Scripture by tradition, we are to correct tradition by Scripture, if we would hearken to St. Cyprian, bishop and martyr!

"If the apostles had not left to us the Scriptures," Irenæus asks, "would it not have been necessary to follow

* Adv. Hær. lib. iii. c. 2.

† Ep. lxxiv. Pompeio.

the order of tradition which they have delivered to those to whom they committed the churches? To which order many nations of barbarians assent, who believe in Christ, having salvation written by the Spirit in their hearts, without paper and ink, and diligently keeping the ancient tradition, believing in one God, the Creator. If any one should announce to them, in their own tongue, the things (now) invented, they, stopping their ears, would flee.”*

This passage will convey different meanings to men of different minds. But Irenæus was ignorant of the modern use, or rather abuse, of tradition, according to which his words would be expounded by those who call themselves catholics. He makes tradition the forlorn hope of those who have not the Scriptures, for if these had not been given, we must have followed tradition. He declares that “those things which the apostles taught they afterwards delivered in the Scriptures, the foundation and pillar of our faith.”† When, therefore, the Scriptures were delivered, they superseded unwritten traditions. For the Scriptures Irenæus pronounces “perfect, as derived from the word of God and his Spirit.” Eusebius declares that all things which Polycarp professes to have derived from the Lord and his apostles and disciples, were in every respect conformed to the Scriptures. Irenæus, adverting in a passing way to tradition, contends largely against the heretics, from Scripture alone. When he departs from this safe rule, even Romanists will own that he betrays his folly; for then he makes Christ to have suffered at nearly fifty years of age.

Clement of Alexandria, indeed, declares, that his preceptors, the successors to the apostolical doctrine, “kept the sincere tradition of the blessed doctrine which, from Peter, John, James, Paul, as sons from fathers, they received by continual succession. Though few are like the

* Irenæus Adv. Hær. iii. c. 4.

† Lib. iii. c. i.

fathers, these have brought to us the apostolic seed."* And again; "The science, or Gnosis, which, delivered by succession from the apostles to a few ἀγράφως, unwritten, has come down."† He asserts that *he* knew this sublime science, so that he could refute the false gnostics.‡ The mystic sense of Scripture, propagated both in the Word, and by the living voice, enabled him, by Scripture itself, to confute heretics. Now, this delivery of the sublime sense to only three favoured apostles, Peter, James, and John, and by them to the others, is too much of a fable for Rome itself, which has not declared its adhesion. Clement himself may not have believed it, but thought it a good device to stop the mouths of the gnostics. What sublime knowledge of the meaning of Scripture *he* had received by tradition, we may see from his own heathenish works. Tertullian had similar notions, which, however, his Montanism has stripped of much of their influence, even among those who would gladly transfer the authority of Scripture to what is called the tradition of the church. Whoever wishes therefore to know, not what was the doctrine of unwritten tradition, for of this Clement says nothing, but what was the hidden and more sublime sense of Scripture, may consult the Stromata, in which he declares that this profound γνῶσις, or knowledge, is conveyed.§ One page of the unambitious commentators, Henry or Scott, compared with the folio of Clement, will convince any competent judge that the whole story of sublime interpretation, conveyed through James, John, and Peter, (in another place Paul is introduced,) was an arrogant fiction, not to give it a still harsher name.

If of Tertullian we have said little, because his Montanism that has shaken his authority appears in those

Euseb. v. 11.—Clem. Al., Strom. i. 201.

* ἡ γνῶσις δὲ αὐτὴ ἡ κατὰ διαδοχὰς εἰς ὀλίγους ἐκ τῶν ἀποστόλων ἀγράφως παραδοθεῖσα, κατελήλυθε. Strom. vi. 465.

† Strom. i. 202.

§ Strom. i.

works which affect this question, it may still be observed that he affirms, "Even in producing tradition, you say written authority is to be required."* In his book on the Necessity of Veiling the Virgins, he seems to contradict that on Prescriptions; if he does not rather explain it, when he says,—“No one can prescribe to truth; no space of times; no patronage of persons; no privilege of regions: not so much novelty, as truth, convicts heresies.”† If this contradicts his Prescriptions, what are they worth? If it explains them, how completely have the traditionists been mistaken!‡

The heretics, then, introduced the dispute about tradition, by their attacks on the Scripture and on the doctrine of the church, which took up, in its own defence, the argument that we find so largely employed in the second century, the age of heretics. The use made of tradition, to sanction minute rites, and ceremonies, and priestly powers, is a modern invention; for the original argument of the orthodox was this:—We have received what was handed to us from the inspired apostles, first verbally, and then by the Scriptures, which contain the things most surely believed among us. Irenæus says—“If the apostles knew recondite mysteries which they taught to the perfect in secret, apart from others, they would have delivered them to those most especially to whom they committed the churches.”§ Here the Alexandrine Clement's fiction is tacitly condemned.

Tertullian maintains, in his celebrated book of Prescriptions, what all well-informed Protestants hold, receiving as divine revelation nothing but what was delivered to us by prophets and apostles, and has come down to us from the first churches of Christ. It is true, that, in his discourse on the soldier's crown, in which the unscrupulous rhetorician and the fanatical Montanist are strangely

* De Corona Mil., chap. 3. † Chap. 1. ‡ See Appendix A.
§ Adv. Hær., lib. iii. c. 1, 2, 3.

combined, he says—"If no Scripture has determined, certainly custom has confirmed this, which, without doubt, flowed from tradition. Therefore let us inquire whether even tradition ought not to be received, unless written," that is, in the Scriptures. "Unquestionably we will deny that it should be received; if there were no examples of other observances in the way, which, without the means of any Scripture, by the title of tradition alone, we vindicate by the patronage of custom."* He then adduces the ceremonies that had been appended to baptism; the previous renunciation of the devil and his angels; the trine ablution; the answering more than the Lord has prescribed in the gospel; the subsequent tasting of milk and honey, and abstaining from the bath, for a week after baptism. Most of these things are now dropped, even by the advocates for tradition; but here Tertullian introduces tradition for a *new* purpose, which must be defended by argument against those who oppose. All this, however, we may dispose of, with Jerome, by saying Tertullian was not a man of the church. He derives the authority of tradition from nature and reason; but his reasoning is, now that of a madman, and now that of a child, contending that "for a Christian soldier to put on his head a crown of flowers is such sacrilege against the Author of nature, as it would be to put food in our ears, or music in our nose."†

Cyprian here abandons his master, and argues, that "if Christ alone is to be heard, we ought not to attend to what others before us thought fit to be done; but what Christ, who was before all, did. For we ought not to follow the custom of man, but the truth of God; since God, by Isaiah, speaks and says,—"Without cause they worship me, teaching the commands and doctrines of men."‡ "Therefore, neither the apostle himself, nor an angel from heaven, could announce or teach otherwise than what Christ once

* De Corona Militis c. 3.

† Ibid. c. 5, 6.

‡ Ep. 63 Cœcilio, p. 155.

taught and his apostles announced. I greatly wonder whence this has been introduced, that, contrary to the evangelical and apostolical discipline, in certain places water is offered in the Lord's cup, which alone cannot express the blood of Christ."* Again; "A Christian does not wish to follow the custom of anybody, but to obey and do what Christ did, and what he commanded to be done. For the custom of men ought not to be followed, but the truth of God."†. What he calls the Lord's tradition is manifestly, from the whole connexion, what is handed down to us in Scripture. He says, "They who are vanquished by reason oppose to us custom, as if custom were greater than truth, or that was not to be followed in spiritual things which was revealed by the Holy Spirit."‡

When Stephen, bishop of Rome, had quoted tradition, on the subject of re-baptizing heretics, Cyprian replies,— "Whence is that tradition?§ Is it from the Lord, and the evangelical authority, or coming from the commands and epistles of the apostles? For God testifies that those things are to be done which are written. Custom without truth is antiquity of error." "Who is so vain that he would prefer custom to truth?"|| In the Council of Carthage, under Cyprian, Libosus, from Vaga, observed,— "The Lord says, in the Gospel, 'I am the truth.' He did not say, 'I am custom;' therefore, the truth being manifested, let custom yield to truth." Let it be carefully noticed, that Cyprian asks, whether that tradition to which his opponent appealed, came from the evangelical authority, that is, the gospel, or from the epistles.

It must not, as some may suppose, be reckoned one of the numerous contradictions of the fathers, that they, after asserting the sufficiency and sole authority of Scripture, appeal to tradition; for as *they* used this latter term

* Epis. 63, p. 152.

+ Ep. 63, p. 155.

† Ep. 73 Jubaiano, 203.

§ Ep. 74 Pompeio, 211.

|| Ep. 75 Firmilianus Cypriano, p. 236.

it was in perfect harmony with Protestant views. The tradition was, that all the preaching of the apostles was now deposited in Scripture, which whosoever receives has the genuine apostolical tradition. They who adopt the modern Romanist notion, indeed, could not, and would not, adopt also the language of the fathers concerning the sufficiency of Scripture, or say with Tertullian, "The Scripture denies what it does not denote."

It must not be passed unnoticed that the fathers appeal to the Sibylline* verses, as divine oracles. Various nations had their sibyls, like our gipsy fortune-tellers; and while those of Greece were most renowned, the Delphic sibyl was of highest antiquity, and the Erythrean, in the time of Alexander, of greatest repute. Whether the sibyl palmed her verses on Tarquin or he palmed the story on the people, Virgil pretends to refer to her, in his fourth eclogue, though it is probable that he borrowed from Hesiod.

These prophecies were delivered in the form of Greek hexameters, which Lucian ridicules; but those which the Romans consulted on critical occasions should have been in Latin; for they prescribed to an unlearned people the rites and sacrifices which were supposed to avert the anger of the gods. As the acrostics contained in these verses naturally awakened Cicero's suspicions that the sibyls were not so mad as they pretended; so the Delphic oracles which they delivered had previously induced Demosthenes to conclude that the prophetess, or the god of Delphos, might be bribed by money, or awed by power.

Those predictions of a future king and his happy reign, which some have ascribed to the sibyls, have been traced

* The name has been derived from Θεου βουλή, God's council, σεις being Æolic for θεος; from which, however, Salmasius dissents. Fabricius gives another etymology, the oriental root, "סבל, portare, quo insignitæ fuerunt; quod spiritum fatidicum, utero inclusum, censitæ fuerint, instar gravidarum, gestare."

by others to the poetic fancies of Homer and Hesiod. But the sibylline verses to which the Christians appealed must have been, at least *additions*, manufactured from the sacred Scripture. The modern collection contains many clear prophecies concerning Christ and his kingdom, a denunciation of Nero as antichrist, a promise of a millennial kingdom on earth, with a threat of eternal punishment to the wicked, from which some of them, however, were to be delivered by the prayers of the just.

Though these things are so manifestly alien from the heathen sibyls, Justin Martyr, in his first Apology, declares that the Roman government threatened with death the readers of Hystaspes, the sibyl, because these prophecies were in favour of the Christians. Justin had met with some verses thought to be prophetic, and he deemed them so favourable to Christianity, that he ascribed the decree against reading the sacred books of the Romans, to the energy of evil demons, who wished to keep the empire in the dark.* Clement of Alexandria says, "I will adduce as a teacher to you the prophetess, sibyl.† If you refuse to hearken to a prophetess, hear your philosopher."‡ Irenæus has been said to prove that Clement of Rome and Hermas quoted the sibyl.

Tertullian says, "All the things that are contrary to the truth are made out of the truth itself, the spirits of error producing that rivalry.§ Some have thought that the sibylline verses which are quoted in support of Christianity, were invented by those who appealed to their evidence. But how could they have hoped to serve their cause by such a fraud? Clement of Alexandria, with other fathers, believed them real inspirations afforded to the Gentiles to prepare them for Christ. Some of the

* Apol. i. 82. Paris ed.

+ Admon. ad. Gen., p. 24. διδάσκαλον δὲ ἡμῖν παραθήσομαι τὴν προφήτιν Σιβυλλαν.

‡ Admon. ad Gen., p. 25.

§ Apol. c. 47.

Romanists adopt this opinion, in deference to the fathers, and to support their own errors, which, however, would be proved by such evidence to be antichristian, and, in fact, heathen. In the opinion of Clement of Alexandria, that these sybil prophetesses had a demoniac inspiration, Ambrose concurs. But Satan would be divided against himself, if he published things so honourable to Christ as appear in the present sibylline verses. Vossius ascribed them to Jews who wished, like Josephus, to commend their religion to the Gentile world; but this would not account for what is so favourable to Christ, whom they reject. Others think that heathen poets and philosophers stole from the divine writings what they put into oracular verse, in order to give to their gods the credit of these prophecies; but this also would be serving the religion they hated, by making their gods prophets, to foretel its introduction and triumph. The difficulty of coming to a satisfactory conclusion might induce us to abandon a question not worth the trouble it demands, were it not that the fathers force it upon our notice. Justin, Clement of Alexandria, Athenagoras, Theophilus of Antioch, Origen,* Tertullian, Arnobius, Lactantius, and Augustine,† appeal to these sibyls, so that the Christians were called sibyllists.

As the number of the sibyls is variously reported, from one to ten, and their verses were a kind of secret, opportunity was afforded for inserting additions which some Christians might have practised in a sportive way, out of contempt for the supposed inspiration of these heathen prophetesses. The collection of these verses, contained in the *Bibliotheca Græca* of Fabricius, doubtless contains more than the fathers ever saw. A celebrated acrostic, formed of the initials of "Jesus Christ the Son of God our Saviour," will at once be pronounced a Christian forgery, if the solecism can be allowed.

* Cont. Cels., lib. 5, 272.

† De Civit., lib. xviii. cap. 46.

The imprudence of the fathers in quoting these authorities may be seen by the manner in which the heathen repelled them; for Celsus replies to Origen, that the Christians had inserted absurd and blasphemous things into the sibylline oracles.

The whole subject has been discussed with equal learning and wisdom by Fabricius, to whom the reader must now be referred.* The early appeals to these heathen oracles show the current of those times when some Christians must have been guilty of wilful forgery, to which they were tempted by the superstitious relics of heathenism, which led many to believe more readily in Christianity, on the supposition that it was foretold in the sibylline books.

PART II.—*Of the Divine Nature and Attributes.*

THE fathers never appear to greater advantage than when expressing their views of the unity and attributes of Deity, in opposition to the Polytheism of the heathen; for with the Jews they were here in perfect accord, the God of the New Testament being that of the Old.

The Epistle to Diognetus powerfully exposes the inconsistency of idolatry with all just notions of a Deity:—

“ See, Diognetus, not only with your eyes but with your intellect, of what substance, or of what form, they are, whom ye call and think gods. Is not one *stone*—like the pavement you tread upon? Another *brass*—no better than that of the brazen vessels we have in common use? Another *wood*—already even worm-eaten? Another *silver*—needing a man to guard it, that it may not be

* Fabricii Bibliotheca Græca, lib. i. c. 29—33. Cicero de Divinitate, lib. ii.—Josep. Antiq., lib. i. c. 5, p. 12, 668, 269.—Bochart Geog., lib. i. c. 27.—Justin Admon. ad Gentes, 36.—Hermas Vision, 2.—Clem. Strom. i. 223; Strom. vii.—Origen contr. Cels., lib. ii. c. 12.—Theoph. ad Autol., lib. ii.—Tertullian contra Nationes.—Lactan., lib. i. c. 6, iv. 15.—Augustine de Civit., lib. xviii. c. 23, 47.—Advers. Faust. Manich., lib. xiii. c. 15.—Jerom.

stolen? Another *iron*—eaten by rust? Another *earthenware*—not more elegant than what is made for the vilest use? Are they not all deaf and dumb?—blind?—lifeless?—insensible?—motionless?—corruptible?—corrupted? Do you call these gods? Do you serve them? Do you bow down to them? For this you hate the Christians; because they do not think such things gods! Do not even you, who suppose them deities, despise them much more? Much more mock and revile them? Worshipping the wooden and pottery gods, unguarded, (as not worth stealing;) but the silver and gold ones locking up at night, and placing guards over them by day, that they may not be stolen. A *man* would not willingly bear this contempt, for he has sense and reason; but the stone bears it, for it is senseless.* The Deity is the Almighty, the universal Creator, the invisible God.† The God who is the Sovereign and Creator of all things, who made all things, and arranges them all in order, was not only philanthropic, but also long-suffering. He always was so, and is, and will be, mild and good, and without passion, and true; and he *alone* is good.”‡

The Roman Clement says to the Corinthians,—“Our all-merciful and beneficent Father has bowels (of compassion) towards them that fear him.”§ All things being seen and heard, (by him,) let us fear him and forsake evil works.”|| The all-seeing God and Sovereign of the spirits, and Lord of all flesh, grant to every soul that invokes his glorious and holy name, faith, fear, peace, patience, and long-suffering.”¶

Justin Martyr exclaims,—“There is one Marcion of Pontus, yet living, teaching that there is some other god greater than the Creator.** We are not atheists; for we worship the Creator of this universe.†† No one can give a

* Cap. 2.

|| Cap. 28.

+ Cap. 7.

¶ Cap. 58.

‡ Cap. 8.

** Apol. i. p. 43, Paris ed. 70.

§ Cap. 23.

†† Ap. i. p. 19, Paris ed. 60.

name to the inexpressible Deity; for if any one should venture to utter it, he would rave as a vile madman.”* He said to Moses, “I am the Lord; I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, their God; but my name have I not made known to them.”† We are taught, that “He who is good in the beginning created all things of formless matter‡ for the sake of man.§ You ought to think that it is not impossible for God to be able to do whatever he pleases.”||

Irenæus, against the heretics, contends for “one God, maker of heaven and earth.”¶ This is the first article of his creed, which, as well as Tertullian’s, differs from the modern form, in saying, “I believe in one God;” in opposition to the heretics, rather than the Pagans or Jews. For Tertullian says, “Hermogenes learned from the Stoics to place, along with the Lord, matter which also itself always was; not born nor made, having neither beginning nor end. So Hermogenes infers two Gods.”**

Irenæus applies the term Father to the Creator of all things; but Austin added, his relation to the Son whom the Father from eternity begat. The former says, “It is ridiculous to suppose God could not by his own will make all things from nothing; but to ascribe moist matter to the tears of Achamoth, being ignorant of the power of a spiritual and divine substance, and not believing that God, who is rich and powerful, created matter itself.†† All the church through the whole world has received this tradition from the apostles, that there is one God, the maker of heaven and earth.”‡‡

Thus writes Clement of Alexandria: “If, then, according to Plato, either from God himself, or from those

* Ap. i. p. 90, Paris 94.

+ Dialog. p. 408, Paris 355.

† Apol. i. p. 14, Paris 58.

§ This seems to be a quotation from Wisdom, xi. 17.

|| Dialog., pars secunda, 320, Paris 310.

¶ Lib. i. c. 2.

** Adv. Herm., c. i. 4.

†† Lib. ii. c. 10.

‡‡ Lib. ii. c. 9.

descended from God, the truth of God must be learned, we, selecting the testimonies from the divine oracles, may justly boast that we are taught the truth by the Son of God.* He introduces Peter, saying, in his preaching, "Know, therefore, that God is one, who has made the commencement of all things, and has power over the end, even the invisible One who sees all things; the incomprehensible who comprehends all things; who needs nothing, but all need him; and for whom are all things; inconceivable, eternal, incorruptible, unmade, who has made all things by the word of his power."†

Origen thus pleads for the Jews: "With them nothing is allowed to be God, but he who is over all; no maker of images is suffered. There was no painter or statuary in their commonwealth, the laws expelling all such, that there might be no pretence for the formation of idols, turning the eyes of the mind from God, who said, 'Thou shalt not make any graven image.' "‡

Minucius Felix shows how the heathen scorned the Christian idea of Deity, asking; "Who? where is that unique, solitary, forsaken God, whom no free nation, at least no Roman, devotion, has known? That God of theirs whom they can neither show nor see, who diligently inquires into the manners, acts, words, and secret thoughts of all? They would have him to be running about, troubling himself with everything, impudently curious; he cannot serve individuals, being engaged with the universe; nor suffice for the universe, being occupied with individuals." §

The immateriality of Deity is well expressed by Athenagoras: "To us who distinguish God from matter, and show that matter is one thing, and God another, and that there is much difference between them, (for the Deity is unbegotten and eternal; only by the mind and reason

* Strom. vi. 486.

† Advers. Cels., lib. iv. 181, 182.

+ Strom. vi. 457.

§ Octav., c. 10.

seen ; but matter begotten and corruptible,) is it not unreasonable to apply the term atheism ? ” *

Tertullian, however, who might have escaped censure, under the concealment of his obscure style, is positively charged by Augustine with making the Deity material. For, he says, “ God made man of his own substance with regard to the soul.” † As far as humanity can define Deity, I define him as every man’s conscience will testify, that God is supremely great, eternal, unborn, unmade, without beginning or end. He must, then, be unique, having no equal. Truth has pronounced, if God is not one, he is nothing. For how could there be two supremely great ? Sure this is supremely great that has no equal. If you would have two, why not more ? God is first known by nature, then recognized by instruction. ‡ The prescience of God (which some moderns have denied) has as many witnesses as he has made prophets.” §

But the most important of the common-places of theology, the attributes of Deity, never obtained from the early Christians the distinction it deserves, and which, by shedding light on every other theme, it richly repays. A compound of the pantheism of the east, with the dreams of Plato, appears in Justin, becomes more conspicuous in his disciple, Tatian, and frequently breaks out in the writings of Clement and others of the Alexandrian school.

PART III.—*The Divinity of Christ.*

As it was natural that the early Christians should speak much of the original glory of their Saviour, to defend themselves against the reproaches poured upon them by Jews and heathens, as worshippers of a crucified Man ; so the heretics, who denied his incarnation, compelled the orthodox writers to dilate upon this theme. To Diognetus, Christ is thus exhibited : — “ The almighty, universal

* Legatio pro Christianis, p. 5.

† Ibid., lib. i. c. 3, 4.

+ Adv. Marc., lib. ii. c. 5.

§ Ibid., lib. ii. c. 5.

Creator, the invisible God, has sent from heaven to men the truth; and the holy and incomprehensible Word; and has established him in their hearts, not as one might compare it to sending to men some servant, or angel, or ruler, or one of those that govern earthly affairs, or one of those that are entrusted with administrations (dioceses) in heaven; but the very Artificer and Creator of all things, by whom he created the heavens, by whom he shut up the sea in its proper bounds, whose mysteries the elements faithfully guard; from whom the sun has received the measure of its daily courses to keep; whom the moon obeys when he commands her to appear at night; whom the stars obey, following the course of the moon; by whom all things are arranged, and limited, and subjected, the heavens, and the things in the heavens; earth, and the things in the earth; sea, and the things in the sea; fire, air, the abyss; things in the height; things in the depth; things in the midst. Him, he sent to them: how, then? as men might think, in domination, and terror, and astonishment? No, verily, but in mildness, meekness. He sent, as a king sending a son, a king; as he that sent a god; as to men he sent; as one that saves, he sent; as persuading, not as forcing; for force applies not to God. As calling, not persecuting, he sent; as loving, not judging, he sent. For he *will* send him judging; and who shall endure his presence? Christians are cast to wild beasts that they may deny the Lord, and do you not see that they are not conquered? Do you not see that the more they are that punish, the more the others abound? These do not seem the works of man; this is the power of God; these are the demonstrations of his presence.* Pliny shows that Christians were known to sing hymns to Christ, as God; for his *quasi deo* is rendered by Tertullian *ut deo*.†

“The sceptre of the majesty of the Deity, our Lord Jesus Christ,” says Clement, the Roman, “came not with

* Ad. Diog., c. 7.

† Apol., c. 2.

the blustering of a boaster, nor of arrogance, though he had it in his power;* but in lowliness, as the Holy Spirit has spoken of him. Our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and majesty for ever. Amen.† This is the way, beloved, in which we have found our salvation, Jesus Christ, the High Priest of our offerings, the guardian and helper of our weakness. By this (Saviour) we look up to the heights of heaven; by this we behold, as in a mirror, his spotless and surpassing countenance; by this are opened the eyes of our heart; by this our senseless and darkened mind revives, as the flowers, by looking into his wondrous light; by this the Sovereign (God) has chosen that we should partake of immortal knowledge; who, being the brightness of his magnificence, is so much better than the angels, as he has inherited a superior name. For thus it is written,—‘Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire;’ but of his Son, the Sovereign says,—‘Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.’ And again,—‘Sit at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.’”‡ Here Clement quotes the Epistle to the Hebrews, which his unchangeable church afterwards rejected and again adopted. “All these things the faith in Christ confirms; for he himself addresses us thus, by the Holy Ghost:—‘Come, ye children, hearken to me,’”§ considering Christ as the God who addresses us in the Old Testament. On the other hand, the Sovereign, ὁ δεσπότης, he seems to appropriate to the Father: “Let us consider how the Sovereign shows the resurrection, of which he has made the Lord Jesus Christ the first-fruits.”|| But when Clement introduces the Son as coming from Judah, he adds,—“According to the flesh;” seeming to allude to Romans ix. 5.¶ Addressing Polycarp, Ignatius speaks of Christ as “above time, and with-

* 1 Ep. ad Cor. c. 16. καίπερ δυνάμενος.

† 1 Ep. to Cor. c. 36.

|| Ibid.

+ Chap. 20.

§ 1 Cor. c. 22.

¶ Ibid.

out time," *ὑπέρχαιρον καὶ ἄχρονον*. "I wish you well in our God Jesus Christ." He tells the Ephesians, "There is one Physician, fleshly and spiritual, made and not made; in flesh, being God; in death, true life; both from Mary and from God; first, a sufferer, and then impassible; Jesus Christ our Lord.* For our God, Jesus Christ, brought forth by Mary, according to the Divine dispensation, of the seed of David, indeed, but by the Holy Spirit:† who was with the Father before the ages, (of time,) but in the end was manifested.‡ For there is one God, who has manifested himself by Jesus Christ his Son, who is the eternal Word, proceeding, not from silence—who has in all things pleased him that sent him."§

The following are the words of Polycarp:—"God raised up from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom all things celestial and terrestrial are subjected; whom every breath worships; who is coming (as) Judge of the living and dead."|| The church that had been deprived of his labours gives this account of the faith:—"It is impossible we should worship any other than Christ, who died for the salvation of man: we adore him as the Son of God."¶

Justin Martyr, in his first Apology, affirms, "When Socrates attempted to draw others from demons, these caused him to be put to death as an atheist, just as they treat us. For not only were these errors exposed to the Greeks by Socrates, but also, among the barbarians, by the Word himself, who had taken a form and become a man, and was called Jesus Christ. We confess we are atheists to those that are accounted gods; but not with regard to that most true God, the Father of righteousness; but him, and the Son, who came from him, and the prophetic Spirit, we reverence and worship.** The appearances of God to the ancient patriarchs, Justin affirms

* Chap. 7.

§ Ad Magnes. c. 8.

† Ad Ephes. c. 18.

|| Ad Philipp., c. 2.

** P. 11. Paris, 56.

‡ Ad Magnes. 6.

¶ Euseb., lib. iv. c. 15.

were those of the Son; as, to Abraham under the oak of Mamre, and to Moses in the bush.

“All these things were foretold by our teacher, the Son of the Father of all, and Sovereign God, and his Apostle, Jesus Christ, from whom we are called Christians.* He is become our teacher, and for this was born, Jesus Christ, crucified under Pontius Pilate, the procurator of Judea, in the times of Tiberius Cæsar; having been taught that he is the Son of the true God, and holding him in the second place, and the prophetic Spirit in the third rank.† We follow the only unbegotten God, through the Son, Jesus Christ, who alone is properly a son, begotten to God, being his Word, and first-born, and power, and by his counsel, becoming man, he has taught us these things.”‡

Of the validity of the following argument for the divinity of Christ we do not vouch, but give it as Justin's testimony. “In the book of Exodus, that the name of God himself was also Jesus (which he says was not manifested to Abraham, nor to Jacob) was accordingly announced by Moses in a mystery, and we have understood (it). For so it is said,—‘And the Lord spake to Moses, Say to this people, Behold, I send my angel before thy face, that he may keep thee in the way, that he may lead thee into the land which I have prepared for thee. Attend to him and hear him; do not disobey him, for he will not let thee escape; for my name is in him.’ Who, therefore, led your fathers into the land? Now, then, consider that he who was surnamed with the name Jesus was before called Auses, (Hoshea.) For if ye will consider this, ye will know that the name of him who spoke to Moses was Jesus, (the same as Joshua.)”§

Theophilus of Antioch represents Christ as taking “the person|| of the Father,” conversing with Adam in Paradise,

* Apol. i. p. 18.

+ Ibid. p. 19.

† Apol. i. 35.

§ Dialog., pars 2, 300.

|| τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ Πατρὸς. Ad Autolycum, lib. ii.

in the person of God. “But when God chose to do whatever he had counselled, he begat this uttered Word;* the first-born of all creation; not being himself deprived of the Word, but having begotten the Word and continually conversing by his Word. Whence the sacred Scriptures, and all who are moved by the Spirit teach us. Of the number of whom John says,—‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God.’ Showing that at first God was alone, and in him was the Word. Afterwards he says,—‘And the Word was God; all things were by him, and without him was not even one thing.’ The Word, therefore, being God, and from God, by nature,† whenever the Father of all pleases, he sends him to any place, who, being come, is heard and seen.”‡

Clement of Alexandria speaks thus of Christ:—“He who was from David, and before him, the Word of God.§ The apostolic inspiration says, when the kindness and philanthropy of God our Saviour appeared:§ ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.’|| But now to men this same Word has appeared, who alone is two, both God and man, the cause to us of all good things, while we are expecting the blessed hope and appearance of the glory of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ.”¶

The following words are allied to those of Justin Martyr, concerning the distinction between the begotten and unbegotten:—“Since one, indeed, is the unbegotten, the Almighty God, and one the fore-begotten, by whom were all things, and without him was not even one thing. For God is truly one, who has made a beginning of all things, meaning the first-begotten Son.”**

“Believe, O man, on the Man and God; believe, O man, on the living God, who suffered and is adored; be-

* τοῦτον τὸν Λόγον ἐγέννησε προφορικόν. Ad. Autol. ii.

† ἐκ Θεοῦ πεφυκώς.

|| P. 4

‡ Lib. ii.

¶ P. 4.

§ Admon. ad Gent., p. 3.

** Strom. vi. p 464.

lieve, ye slaves, on the dead One; believe, O all men, on the only one, who is the God of all men."*

"Truth is beauty; for it is even God; but that God becomes man, because God wills it. God in man, and the man God, and the Mediator fulfilling the will of the Father; for the Word which is common to both is a Mediator, God's Son, and man's Saviour, his Minister and our Schoolmaster."† But the Word that came forth, creation's cause, then also begets himself, when the Word became flesh that he may also be seen."‡ This seems to refer the generation of the Son to his incarnation.

After speaking of a pious man as most excellent on earth, and of angels, as best in heaven, he says, "But most perfect, and holy, and supreme, and authoritative, and royal, and beneficent, is that nature of the Son, who, nearest to the only Sovereign, rules all things according to the will of the Father, who steers the universe in the best manner, working all things by unwearied and invincible power; for he operates, inspecting the secret thoughts. For the Son of God never comes forth from his place of inspection, being undivided, inseparable, not passing from place to place, being everywhere, at all times, and not contained in any place, being the whole mind, the whole paternal light, the whole eye, seeing all things, hearing all things, knowing all things; with power, investigating the powers. To him is subjected all the hosts, both of angels and of gods, (even) to the paternal Word who has received that holy dispensation; for the sake of him who rules. On which account, also, are all his human creatures; some, indeed, acquainted (with this), but some not; some as friends; some as faithful servants; some merely servants. This is the Teacher who instructs in mysteries him that knows (the true gnostic) and the believer in his good hopes; and the hard-hearted man (instructs) with a rectifying discipline by an energy that is

* Admon. ad Gent., 49.

† Pædag., lib. iii. c. 1.

‡ Strom. iv. 403.

felt. Hence is providence private or special; and public and universal. But that there is a Son of God, and that this is the Saviour and Lord of all, whom we speak of, the prophetic writings plainly show."* It should be observed here, that Clement applies to the Father only, the article, of the importance of which this writer shows himself aware.†

The Pedagogue says, "O ye children, our Teacher is like to his Father, the Deity, whose sinless unblamable Son he is, impassable as to the soul; God in form of man, servant to the paternal will; Word; God who is in the Father and is at the right hand of the Father, and with the form God." "Christ was before the morning star, and was the Word who was with God and was God."‡ He invites them to hymn the God, Word, Jesus, the Eternal, the one great High Priest of the one God. "The divine Word who is truly God, most manifest, who is equalled to the Sovereign of all, for he was his Son, and the Word was in God."§

Origen asks, "Who else is able to save, and to bring to the God over all, the soul of man, except the God, Word, || *ὁ Θεὸς Λόγος*?" though Origen has been said never to have called Christ God with the article. "Who, when he was in the beginning with God, became flesh, for the sake of these who could not otherwise see him as he was, the Word who was with God and was God."¶ He contends with great ability that Christ was promised to be born of a virgin and called Immanuel, God with us.** "Jesus, being God's Son, is made known, even before his incarnation. But I affirm, that, after the incarnation, he is always known to those who have discerning mental eyes, to be most divine and to have descended to us from God."†† He

* Strom. 7, p. 505.

+ P. 335, 6.

‡ Ad Gentes, p. 4, 55.

§ Admon. ad Gent., 51.

|| Contra Cels., lib. vi. p. 322, 3.

¶ Contra Cels., lib. vi. 322.

** Lib. i. p. 26.

†† Contra Cels., lib. iii. p. 119.

shows that Christians call Christ God;* and against the Artemonites, he proves, by the psalms and hymns of the brethren, that Christ was adored as God.

Tertullian argues that Christ must be a divine person; because he had all power at all times; ruling from the creation.†

The conversion of philosophers introduced the habit of theorizing in a platonic style concerning the Word and Son of God; but Justin, who led the dance, maintained the divinity of Christ, if with little accuracy, yet with great zeal. "He is from God, as fire is kindled from fire."‡ "He is different from the Father in number, not in will." Against the heretics, who affirmed that the Father sends out and calls back the Son, as an emanent virtue, Justin contends for a proper personality. He, however, assigns to the Son a second place after the immutable and ever-existing God, the Father. He seems to think the Son existed not necessarily; but by the council and power of the Father,§ it is, however, not always clear, whether he speaks of the Saviour before or after the incarnation.

Athenagoras, affirming that the Christians worship one God, observes, "He is unbegotten; for that which is, is not begotten, but that which is not;"|| by which he seems either to make Christ once not to have been, or to apply the generation of the Son to his incarnation. In either way he is not orthodox. He bids the emperors not to wonder that "we say God has a Son; for the Son of God is the Word of the Father in idea and efficacy, with whom and by whom were all things; for the Father and the Son are one. God having the Word eternally in himself, being eternally rational. Let no one wonder that we say the Father God and God the Son and the Holy Ghost.

* Lib. i. 52, ii. 62. + Advers. Prax., 176. ‡ Dial. 267, Paris, 284.

§ *ἐκ τε τοῦ ὑπηρετεῖν τῷ πατρικῷ βουλήματι, καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ Πατρὸς θελήσει γεγενῆσθαι.* Dial. p. 284.

|| Legatio pro Christianis, p. 5.

But we speak of God, and the Son his Word, and the Holy Spirit."

The divinity of Christ is said to have been first denied, towards the end of the second century, by Theodotus, a tanner; but this seems to mean that he was the first who, at Rome, affirmed that Christ was a mere man. Paul of Samosata was the heretic of this school, who made most noise, towards the decline of the third century. The vague account given of him by Eusebius, describes his manners rather than his doctrines, and leads us to suspect more spleen against his person than holy indignation at his heresy. The epistle from the fathers of the council held at Antioch to depose him, merely says, "He affirmed that Christ was of the earth," which might mean no more than that he was born, lived, and died, upon the earth. Paul, however, is accused of forbidding the ancient hymns, in honour of Christ, to be sung, and substituting for them verses in praise of himself. He was deposed and excommunicated, but not put away from the premises of the church, without the interference of the civil government.* Of Dr. Priestley's Ebionites and Nazarenes, it is not necessary to speak, except to refer to the controversy between him and Horseley, which was too personal to yield the most valuable fruit.

PART IV.—*The Trinity.*

THE word Trinity does not occur in the earliest age, but, as we have seen, Justin conveys the idea, and Irenæus has said, "The church believes in one God the Father, and in one Jesus the Son of God, incarnate for our salvation, and in the Holy Spirit, who, by the prophets, preached the dispensations of God, the advent, and that generation which is from the Virgin, and the suffering, and the resurrection from the dead, and the bodily reception into heaven of the beloved Christ Jesus our Lord, and his

* Euseb. Hist. Eccl., lib. vii. c. 29.

coming from heaven in the glory of the Father, to sum up all things, and to raise all flesh of all mankind, that to Christ Jesus our Lord, and God, and Saviour, and King, according to the good pleasure of the invisible Father, every knee may bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth."*

"God needed none of these (angels) to make what he had determined should exist, as though he had not hands of his own. For there is always with him the Word and wisdom, the Son and Spirit, by whom and in whom he did all things freely and spontaneously.† In the name, Christ, is understood he who anointed, and he who is anointed, and the anointing itself; the Anointer is the Father, the Anointed is the Son, and the unction is in the Spirit."‡

Theophilus of Antioch first employed the word Triad, or Trinity, as was shown in the sketch of his life and writings. This early writer seems not to use the term as an exotic in Christian theology; and we hear Clement of Alexandria speaking of "those who know the blessed Trinity of the holy abodes."§ "To thank the only Father, and Son, Pedagogue and Teacher, Son with the Holy Spirit, all things in one, in whom are all things, by whom all things are one, of whom (we) all are members; to whom be glory both now and ever. || O mystical miracle! one, indeed, is the Father of all, and one is the Word of all, and the Holy Spirit one and the same everywhere."¶

But the general confession of the Trinity was not always free from suspicious expressions, which Athenagoras, a writer not much consulted, labouring to avoid, looks up to heaven as the realm of perfect light.** Irenæus affirms,

* Advers. Hær., lib. i. c. 2. † Lib. iv. c. 37. ‡ Lib. iii. c. 20.

§ οἱ γνωρίζοντες τὴν μακαρίαν τῶν ἁγίων τριάδα μονῶν.—Strom. vii. 519.

|| Pædag., lib. iii. 191.

¶ Ibid., lib. i. 77. Clement supposes that Plato designed, by some of his speculations, τὴν ἁγίαν τριάδα μνηύεσθαι, to intimate the Holy Trinity.—Strom. v. p. 436.

** Legatio, p. 12.

“Therefore one God made all things by the Word and Wisdom;” by which he seems to mean the Son and Spirit, as he adds, “and adorned them by Wisdom, which is the Spirit, before all constitution or creation.” Proverbs viii. 22, is quoted as a proof; so that what is now appealed to, as evidence of the divinity of the Son, is here applied to the Spirit.*

“He who made all things, with his word, is justly called sole God and Lord. Therefore Christ himself, with the Father of the living, is God.” He quotes a celebrated saying of some one:—“The immense Father himself is measured in the Son; for the measure of the Father is the Son, for he comprehends him. Neither the Lord, nor the Holy Spirit, nor the apostles, ever absolutely and definitively name him God who is not God.”†

Irenæus, as well as others, speaks of the Father as incapable of being seen, or revealed, except by the Son. “An invisible thing is the Father of the Son; but a visible is the Son of the Father;” † *i. e.*, the Son has his divinity from the Father, but the Father owes his visibility to the Son. On the knowledge of the day of judgment, he says, “Let us learn by that very thing, that the Father is over all; for he says, the Father is greater than I” To these expressions, however, others give a more orthodox turn. The fathers talk of mind, and reason, and prolation, and manifestation, and generation, and of the impossibility of any but the Father and the Son knowing their nature or relation. In these discussions are contained the germs of the Nicene Creed.

Irenæus copies Justin in representing Christ as the Divine person who appeared to the patriarchs. The fathers take an unwise liberty in illustrating the generation of the Son, which they compare to the flowing of streams from a fountain, and beams from the sun; but the Alex-

* Advers. Hæres., lib. iv. c. 37.

† Ibid. lib. iii. c. 6.

‡ Ibid. lib. iv. c. 14.

andrian bishop, Alexander, justly censures this, though for a reason founded on his ignorance of Hebrew, quoting these words from Isaiah:—"His generation who shall declare?" This, however, is the constant patristic error in the interpretation of that text, which asks, "Who can describe that generation by which the Lord of glory was crucified."

The Alexandrine Clement abounds, as might be expected, in doubtful disquisitions on the divinity of Christ and the Trinity. When he calls the Father "the sole perfect one," he adds,—“For the Son is in the Father, and *this is in that.*” He quotes the first verse of the Gospel of John, thus: “The Word was *in* God.” In another place* he calls the Son the Lord Almighty; but afterwards, seems to make the Son inferior to the Father, though next to him, and sharer in his perfections of omnipresence and omniscience. He says, “The command to Abraham, not to slay Isaac, hinted at the Deity of the Lord.”† He calls the Lord himself a child: “Behold, a child is born to us; a Son is given to us; whose dominion is on his shoulders, and his name is called, the Angel of the Great Council. By the same prophet, he declares his greatness; Wonderful Counsellor; Mighty God; Everlasting Father; Prince of Peace.”‡ Clement must have entertained the Athanasian idea, that there is one Deity, or divine nature, that belongs to the three persons; of each of whom it may be predicated that he is the one Almighty God; *i. e.*, in opposition to Polytheism. Tertullian, also, says there are three persons, one substance; meaning by the last word, essence, or divinity; and by person, substantial existence. He speaks of one substance in three coherings: *unam substantiam in tribus coherentibus.*§ I say that the Father is one, the Son is another, and the

* Strom. iv., at the commencement.

† ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῦ Κυρίου τὴν θεότητα αἰνίττεται, μὴ σφαγεῖς.—Pædag., lib. i. c. 5.

‡ Ibid.

§ Advers. Prax., c. 12.

Holy Spirit is another.* The Father is the whole substance; but the Son is a derivation and portion of the whole. "The Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, is the sanctifier of the faith of those who believe in the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit."†

Arianism at first appears, when Clement says, "The nature of the Son is most near to the only Omnipotent; which governs all things according to the will of the Father.‡ He was the Father's counsellor; this was the wisdom in which the omnipotent God delighted; for the Son is the power of God, the most supreme Word of the Father, before all that is begotten." The former part of this passage, which seems to claim for the Father alone omnipotence, may be intended to express no more than the orthodox doctrine; but it has a suspicious aspect.

The ante-Nicene fathers scarcely distinguish between the essence and the personality of Deity; nor, except Tertullian, does any one observe, that even the Father could not be a father, till the Son was a son; and that if the former was an eternal Father, the latter must be an eternal Son. Unhappily, they loved to talk largely of the Trinity before they had learned to understand it, even as far as it may be known.

Tertullian affirms that the unity of God is disposed into a trinity, and thus proceeds, in his crabbed style:—"As though also one were not all things, while all things are from one, namely by unity of substance. But yet let the sacrament of the economy be preserved, which arranges the unity into a trinity, arranging three, Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit. Yet three, not in state, but in order; nor in substance, but in form; nor in power, but in appearance, (specie;) but of one substance, and one state, and of one power; because one God from whom are these degrees (ranks) and forms and species, in the name of the Father

* Chap. 2.

† Advers. Prax., c. 2.

‡ ἡ Υἱοῦ φύσις ἡ τῷ μόνῳ παντοκράτορι προσεχέστατη.—Strom. vii. 504, 5.

and the Holy Spirit reckoned. How, also, they admit of number without division will be demonstrated.* This is said in the third order, because I think the Spirit is from no other than from the Father by the Son.”†

“If he,” (that was baptized by heretics,) says Cyprian, “was made the temple of God, I ask, of what God? If of the Creator; he could not be, for he did not believe on him. If of Christ, neither could he be his temple; for he denies Christ to be God. If of the Holy Spirit; since the three are one, how could he be (the temple)?”‡

On the unity of the church these words occur: “The Lord says, ‘I and the Father are one;’ and again, concerning the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, it is written, ‘and these three are one.’” Here the disputed text in John’s First Epistle, v. 7, is quoted; for nowhere else is it written, these three are one. As Cyprian was the echo of Tertullian, the probability is strengthened that the latter was known to have quoted the disputed text in his work against Praxeas: “Which three are one (thing), unum; not one (person), unus; as it is said, ‘I and my Father are one,’ unum; for unity of substance, not for singularity of number.” It may be said Tertullian quotes only the text, “I and my Father are one;” but he evidently quotes another text, which speaks of *three* as unum, one thing, or existence; or, as he says, substance. Jerome seems to have been falsely charged with introducing the disputed words, without authority, into the Vulgate: for Cyprian had read them in a Latin version, long before. Griesbach yields too much to the suspicion that the earlier fathers merely allegorized the eighth verse; for they here argue, as from express testimonies of Scripture, without any hint of that allegorical interpretation which, it must be confessed, the later writers abundantly employ.

* Advers. Prax., c. 2.

† Ibid. c. 4, and c. 25.

‡ Epist. 73 Jubaiano.

LECTURE III.

THEOLOGY OF THE FIRST AGES, ON THE PURPOSES AND
WORKS OF GOD, IN NATURE AND GRACE.

PART I.

THE decrees of God, of which theologians speak, are by the Scriptures called “his eternal purpose,” which is thus unfolded in the Epistle to Diognetus:—“The Sovereign God, Creator of all things, having revolved in his mind a great and inexpressible design, communicated it to his only Son. As long as he kept in secret, and guarded his wise counsel, he seemed to neglect us, and not to think of us; but when he revealed by his beloved Son, and made known the things prepared for us from the beginning, he then afforded to us at once all things, and imparted his benefits.”

“Future events,” says Justin, “are foretold by prophecy; not that we say, they happen by fatal necessity, but that ‘God has a prescience of what will be done by all men.’* The number of the good and acceptable is foreknown to him, for whose sake he has not yet effected the consummation;”† *i. e.*, till they are all saved, he preserves the world from destruction.

Irenæus mingles prescience and predestination, as the Scriptures employ foreknowledge for predetermination :

* προγνώστου τοῦ Θεοῦ ὄντος τῶν μελλόντων ὑπὸ πάντων ἀνθρώπων πραχθήσεσθαι.
Apol. i. 67. Paris, 82.

† Ibid. 68.

"We were, indeed, predestinated that we should be who were not yet in existence, according to the prescience of the Father."* *Predestinati quidem ut essemus qui nondum eramus secundum præscientiam Patris.*

Clement of Alexandria thus argues:—"For it is no longer becoming of a friend of God, whom God has predestinated before the foundation of the world to be gathered into the highest adoption—that *he* should fall into pleasures or terrors."† "For it was always predetermined by God to save the flock of men; and therefore the good God sent a good Shepherd."

We have already seen that Tertullian sagely observes,— "We have as many proofs of God's prescience as there are prophets, or prophecies rather." But this absolute prescience of future events, including moral actions of accountable creatures, involves consequences which have frightened some into a denial of God's decrees; unwisely concluding, that if we admit the decree of good, we must that of evil too.

The *execution* of the divine purposes brings us to the work of creation; and passing over that of the physical universe, which is ascribed to the Father *by* the Son, we are now to show the doctrine of the ancients concerning angels.

These were supposed by some to be, like the forms presented to the patriarchs, produced for the occasion and then destroyed, which Justin, however, refutes. But he argues in a way that Trypho, if a real Jew, and acquainted with Hebrew, must have known to be very foolish. For Isaiah xxx. 4, which we properly render according to the original,— "His princes were at Zoan, and his ambassadors came to Hanes;" Justin quotes according to the Septua-

* Lib. v. c. i.

† οὐ γὰρ δὴ πρέπον ἔτι, τὸν φίλον τοῦ Θεοῦ ὅν προώρισεν ὁ Θεὸς πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου εἰς τὴν ἄκραν ἐγκαταλεγεῖναι νύσθεσίαν, κ. τ. λ. Strom. vi. 170.

gint:—"For there are in Tanes princes, evil angels;"* which is made a proof that Egypt was inhabited by evil spirits. Justin, indeed, opens to us a mystery which, perhaps, he learned from Josephus and others, and in which not a few agreed with him, that the fall of angels was the effect of the beauty of women.

"The fruits of the earth are under the power of man; but man himself was placed under the providence of the angels, who, having fallen in love with women, begat from them children, who are called demons, who have enslaved the human race by magic writings, by terrors, and by doctrines concerning sacrifices, and incense, and libations; of which they have become greedy since their subjection to lust."† Hence, he accounts for the doctrine of the poets concerning the births and amours of the gods; as Lucian ludicrously exhibits the gods gaping to swallow the smoke from the altars, and like flies licking up the blood of the victims.

To this, which was no private opinion of Justin, but the catholic doctrine of the day, Clement of Alexandria adds a very natural thought:—"That these seduced angels set Samson an example, by letting out their secrets to their mistresses; so that what the chaste angels wished to reserve to the coming of the Lord—*i. e.*, the doctrine of Providence, and the revelation of sublime things—had been already blabbed by the philosophers." This father was the more inexcusable for adopting such a notion, because, in the same breath, he says that the Greeks, who were great thieves, had stolen, without acknowledgment, their knowledge from the writings of Moses and the Prophets. There surely needed no ghost nor demon to tell what was openly recorded in the books of a whole nation.‡

The same vile theology is found in Tertullian, and also in Lactantius, the Christian Cicero, and tutor to the sons

* Dial. pars sec. p. 311, Paris, 305.

† Apol. i. 44, Paris.

‡ Strom. v. p. 401.

of Constantine. Tillemont traces this to Josephus; but whether the fathers derived it from him, or the apocryphal book of Enoch, or from a misconception of Genesis vi. 2, it was never questioned, and seems to have been the pillar, if not the basis, of their false doctrine of chastity. The saints, who were to be angels upon earth, were to guard against imitating the angels from heaven, who, seduced by women, let out their secrets to the uninitiated

The Alexandrian, in his *Pædagogus*, tells the disciples, that "angels are an example of the consequences of lust; for, leaving the divine beauty for the sake of that which fadeth, they have been so long fallen from heaven to earth." * We omit Origen's doctrine of angels, because it forms a part of the heresy with which he is charged; and as we have already observed that Athenagoras adopted Justin's theory, the words of the Athenian have not been transcribed. Tertullian, however, may be allowed to say, "I propose one thing—that they were angels which were those deserters of God, lovers of women, betrayers of this curiosity; therefore also condemned by God." † Another occasion of introducing this doctrine will occur.

But the notion of a twofold fall of angels, though implied, is not clearly announced. As Justin understands the Apostle Paul to mean by "the prince of the power of the air" ‡ the angel to whom that element was committed; so Clement of Alexandria seems to think that the angel of gross matter was the author of the second fall; and in this Athenagoras agrees. §

The demons that sprang from angels and women are supposed, of course, to be hybrid; so that it is difficult to describe their properties. They, however, inhabit heathen temples, animating the idols, dictating oracles, and feasting on the nidor of the sacrifices. This gave a double horror to idolatry; for, beside being an offence to God, it was almost a direct adoration of devils.

* *Pæd.* ii. p. 163.

+ *De Idolatria*, chap. 9.

‡ *Ephes.* ii. 2.

§ ὁ τῆς ἕλης, καὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτῇ εἰδῶν, ἄρχων. *Leg.* 27.

Origen, who seems mortified by his adversary's appeal to the fictions of the book of Enoch, is not satisfied with his own remark, that the book was not understood; for he also mentions some one who thought the text, "The sons of God saw the daughters of men," referred to souls, metaphorically called the sons of God, desiring to have a bodily life; which bodily life again must be metaphorically meant by the phrase, "daughters of men." But Origen dismisses this also, as a solution that he could not strongly recommend;* a specimen of the uncertainty of the fathers, who are obtruded as the only expositors who can make us certain.

Of the fall of man, Irenæus, in the preface to his fourth book, speaks thus:—"They who from the beginning were eye-witnesses knew no such things as the heretics say; but they forewarned us to flee opinions of this kind, foreseeing, by the Spirit, those who would seduce the simple. For as the serpent seduced Eve, promising to her what he had not himself, so also these, pretending greater knowledge and unutterable mysteries, promising absorption into the Pleroma, plunge those who believe them into death. Then, indeed, an apostate angel, by a serpent, having wrought the disobedience of man, thought he should hide himself from the Lord; therefore God attributed to him the same form and appellation; *i. e.*, that of a serpent."

Justin had, in reference to this history, said, "Among us, indeed, the leader of the evil demons is called a serpent,† and Satan, and the devil;" and if we may refer to his disciple, Tatian, who became a heretic, we may quote these words:—"And they followed a certain one, more crafty than the rest."‡ There was, then, at least *one* angel, fallen, before man; but others, it seems, were supposed to have fallen by the influence of the daughters of men.

* Contra Cels. lib. v. 267-8.

+ Apol. i. 46; Paris, 171.

‡ Oratio Contra Græcos.

Of the fall of man, however, the fathers in their Apologies speak much less clearly than the importance of this knowledge to the heathen world required. Clemens Alexandrinus, in his Admonition to the Gentiles, says, "The first man, when he was in Paradise, played at liberty, as he was God's little one; but when he fell into pleasure—pleasure is allegorized as a serpent creeping on its belly—earthly wickedness turned to material (things): the child is led away by lusts, grows up to manhood in disobedience, and refusing to hearken to his Father, disgraces his God.* Such is the force of pleasure!" It would seem that this writer supposed that pleasure was the only serpent concerned in the fall of man. This was probably derived from Philo. Of human depravity he speaks obscurely: "There is no one pure from defilement," says Job; "not even if his life is one day;" quoting Job xxv., and xiv. 4, according to the Septuagint's strange confusion of verses and mistranslation.†

"But let them tell us where the little babe (just) born committed fornication? Or how it fell under the curse of Adam, having done nothing? It remains to them, as it seems, consequently, to say, that the generation is evil; not only that of the body, but also that of the soul, on account of which even was the body. And when David says, 'I was conceived in sin, and in iniquity my mother conceived me,' he speaks, indeed, prophetically—mother Eve." This seems an attempt to escape the evidence of the doctrine of original sin which this text affords. But what an attempt!

Tertullian runs through the history of the fall, concluding thus: "The woman was doomed to pains and subjection, and the man to the earth and to death, in vile

* p. 51.

† Strom. iii. 342. Clemens Romanus had quoted the same text in the same way.

raiment, though before, without scruple, naked.”* “If the benediction of the fathers was destined to the seed without its merits; why not also the guilt of the fathers redound? As grace, so also the offence runs through the whole race.”† Man is condemned to death for tasting one tree, and from thence issue crimes, with punishments, and now all perish, who have never known a sod of Paradise.‡ He affirms that God could not have prevented man’s fall without destroying his free will.§ Man, that was seduced by an angel, was stronger than an angel, being the breath of God more noble than a material spirit of which angels consist. Who makes angels, spirits, and a flame of fire, his ministers.|| Tertullian, by Spirit, meant refined matter. He follows Irenæus in meeting the objection which Marcion drew from the words of God by Isaiah, “I create evil,” justly observing that this was the physical evil of punishment, not moral evil, or sin.¶

On the Mosaic history of the fall, he observes, “that it attributes the cause of the fall to the devil, rather than the serpent; that the devil is properly indicated by the name of the serpent.”** “Eve believed the serpent; Mary believed Gabriel. But did Eve, then, conceive nothing in her womb from the word of the devil? Nay; she conceived; for from thence, as an abject, she brought forth and in pains. The word of the devil was, to her, seed.”††

This father, who had strange notions of souls as having all the dimensions of body, and even the sexual differences of animals,‡‡ denies that souls are *created* when men are brought into existence, maintaining that they spring, velut surculus, as a shoot from Adam.§§

* Advers. Marcion, lib. ii. chap. 11.

† Lib. ii. chap. 15.

‡ Lib. i. 22.

§ Lib. ii. chap. 7.

|| Lib. ii. chap. 9.

¶ Lib. ii. chap. 14.

** Advers. Marcion, lib. ii. chap. 10.

†† De Carne Christi, 17.

‡‡ De Anima, chap. 9.

§§ Ibid. chap. 27. He makes it an affair of sensation, asking, *Nonne aliquid de anima sentimus exire?* Jerome anathematises this opinion; but Augustine says, *Neque legendo neque orando neque rationando invenire*

The depravity of human nature, in its present fallen state, is acknowledged by most of the fathers, though not unfrequently in strange and equivocal terms; but while Clement, the master, seems most guilty, his disciple, Origen, may be supposed to clear up in some measure the real sentiments of both, in the following passage. Celsus had reproached Christ, as the God, sent to sinners,* and Origen had contended that Christ's reason for this was good and sufficient: "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Celsus asks, "Why was he not sent to the innocent? What harm is there in not having sinned?" "We will affirm," says Origen, "that it is impossible to find a man that has not sinned, except the man Jesus." Is it a pitiable complaint if a sinner uses the words of Scripture: "I acknowledge my sin, and my iniquity have I not hidden. What man is perfectly just? Or who is without sin?" For Celsus, admitting the same thing, says, "This may be conceded as true, that the human race is born to sin, or naturally sin."† And then, as if all were not called by the Word, he says, "He ought simply to have called all." But we have above shown that Jesus says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Therefore all men by nature, on account of sin, labouring and burthened, are called by the word of God to rest. For he sent forth his Word and healed them, and delivered them from their corruptions."‡

The monstrous doctrine of a second fall of angels, which was most ominous, and became the fruitful parent of innumerable evils, was not the offspring of philosophy; for the earliest fathers admitted, not only the possibility,

potuisse quomodo cum creatione animarum peccatum originale defendatur. The schoolmen brave this difficulty, and some think the creation of souls proved by Paul's quotation from Aratus: τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἑσμέν.

* τοῖς ἁμαρτωλοῖς πεπεμφθαι τὸν Θεόν. Lib. iii. p. 148.

† πέφυκέ ἁμαρτάνειν.

‡ Contra Cels. lib. iii. 148—150.

but the fact of a fall, before women were in existence. The vile dogma, therefore, was the mere effect of their unskilfulness as interpreters of Scripture, for which some would make them authoritative oracles, though they were evidently led astray by a false interpretation of Genesis vi. 2.

PART II.—*The Redemption of Christ.*

The incarnation, atonement, and intercession of the Redeemer are not taught by the fathers in the formal systematic manner which professed theologians afterwards adopted; but the elements of a system are scattered with rude simplicity, and perplexing vagueness, over their works. After describing to Diognetus the wickedness of men, the long-suffering of God, and the glory of Christ, the anonymous epistolator says, "When our iniquity was filled up, and the recompense, punishment and death, might be expected, the time came which God before appointed in future to manifest his own kindness and power. He, as one love, of transcendent philanthropy, hated us not, cast us not off, nor remembered sin against us. He was long-suffering; he himself has borne with our sins. He himself gave his own Son a ransom for us; the holy for the lawless; the innocent for the wicked; the just for the unjust; the incorruptible for the corruptible; the immortal for mortals. Having, therefore, convinced us, in the former age, of the impossibility of our nature attaining to life, but now having shown the Saviour, able to save even things that were impossible to be saved; from both (these sides of the question) he designed that we should believe in his kindness, to esteem him, nourisher, father, teacher, counsellor, physician, intellect, light, honour, glory, strength, life; not to be anxious for clothing and food.

"This faith, if thou also shalt desire and embrace, first thou wilt receive *knowledge* (of its truth). For God has

loved man, for whom he made the world; to whom he has subjected it all; to whom he has given a revelation and intellect; to whom alone he has given permission to contemplate himself; whom he formed after his own image; to whom he sent his only begotten Son."*

Clement says to the Corinthians, "The Lord Jesus Christ, whose blood was given for us, let us revere. By love the Sovereign received us; on account of the love which he had towards us, our Lord Jesus Christ gave his blood for us, by the will of God, and his flesh for our flesh, and his soul for our souls."†

"The spies gave to Rahab a sign, that she should hang out of her house a scarlet line, signifying that by the blood of the Lord there shall be redemption to all that believe and hope in God."‡

Ignatius, or his interpolator, speaks of "the blood of God:"§ "Let my spirit be the sharer of the fate of the cross, which is a stumbling-block to the unbelievers; but to us, salvation and eternal life. For our God, Jesus the Christ, borne in the womb by Mary, according to the dispensation of God, of the seed of David, indeed, but by the Holy Spirit; who was born and baptized, that by his passion he might cleanse the water; || *i. e.* the water did not cleanse him, but he the water. What else could this mean, but consecrating water to the use of baptism, as the baptized person is consecrated to the service of God?"

He thus warns the Magnesians against Judaism, "I wish you to be filled with confidence in the birth, and suffering, and resurrection, that happened in the time of the government of Pontius Pilate, which was truly and firmly experienced by Jesus Christ, our hope."¶

"I would rather die for Christ Jesus than rule to the ends of the earth; for 'What is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' Him I seek who

* Chap. 9, 10.

§ Ad Ephes. c. 1.

† Chap. 49.

|| Chap. 18.

‡ Chap. 12.

¶ Ad Magnes. c. 11.

died for us. I wish for him who rose for us. Permit me to be an imitator of the suffering of my God. My love is crucified. There are three mysteries of outery (against which, perhaps, the enemies cry out), the virginity of Mary, and her child-birth, and the death of the Lord. A star in the heavens shone above all the rest, and its light was unspeakable, and its novelty strange; all the others, with the sun and moon, were a choir to it—the old kingdom was destroyed, God being manifested in humanity for the renewal of eternal life.”*

Polycarp tells the Philippians, “Firm is the root of your faith that was announced from ancient times, remains till now and bears fruit towards our Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered himself to be brought to death for our sins, whom God raised up, whom, not seeing, ye believe.”†

The account of his martyrdom, given by the church at Smyrna, as preserved in the History of Eusebius, contains these remarks: “The Jews induced the proconsul to refuse to deliver up to us the remains of Polycarp for interment, lest we should forsake the crucified one and worship Polycarp, not considering how impossible it is that we should forsake Christ, who died for the salvation of man.”‡

Justin Martyr tells Trypho, “Sin cannot be washed away by the waters of the ocean, nor by the blood of sheep, but by faith through the blood of Christ and his death, who died for this.”§ He then quotes the whole of the 53rd of Isaiah as a prophecy of Christ suffering for our sins.

“He who is the first-begotten Word of God is also God. Formerly by the form of fire appearing, and in the resemblance of what is incorporeal; now in the time of your dominion, (addressing the Romans,) becoming a man by the virgin, according to the counsel of the Father, for

* Ad Ephes. chap. 19.

† Chap. i.

‡ Lib. iv. c. 15.

§ Dial. p. 160. Paris, 229.

the salvation of those who believe on him, he endured suffering and contempt, that, dying and rising, he might conquer death.* As, by the Word of God, made flesh, Jesus Christ our Saviour had both flesh and blood for our salvation.† But he did not submit to be born and be crucified, as having need of these things, but for the race of men, which, by Adam, had fallen into death and the seduction of the serpent, to say nothing of every sinner's own fault.”‡

“And, again, how it was expressly prophesied by Isaiah, that he should be brought forth of a virgin, hear; for it is expressed thus—‘Behold, the virgin should be with child, and they shall call him, God with us.’”§

Irenæus observes that, “Christ is said to have redeemed us by his flesh and blood; by his obedience paying for our disobedience.”|| “By Paul, Adam himself is called the type of him that was to come, since God the Creator of all things had predestinated the animal man first, truly that he might be saved by the spiritual. As the Saviour pre-existed, it was fit that what was to be saved should exist that the Saviour might not be in vain.”

“As Eve, disobeying, became to herself, and the whole human race, a cause of death; so also Mary, having the predestinated Man, being yet an obedient virgin, was made to herself, and the whole human race, a cause of salvation.”¶ “He who is perfect in all things, the powerful Word, and true Man, rationally redeeming us by his own blood, has given himself a redemption for those who were led into captivity.”**

“There is a most kind and merciful Lord, loving the human race. He united man to God. For if man had not conquered the enemy of man, the enemy had not been justly conquered. Again, unless God had granted

* Apol. i. 94.

† Ibid. 96.

‡ Dial. ii. 331. Paris, 315.

§ Apol. i. 53. Paris, 74.

|| Lib. v. c. 1.

¶ Advers. Hæres. lib. iii. c. 33.

** Ibid. lib. v. c. 1.

salvation, we should not have had it firmly ; and unless man had been joined to our God, he could not have been a partaker of incorruption. It was necessary that the Mediator of God and man, by his own relation to both, should reduce both to unity and concord, and cause that God should assume man, and man should give himself to God.*

The incarnation was opposed by heretics in various ways, on the supposition that it was contrary to the purity and majesty of God to be born into this world, as the Scriptures declare. Tertullian uses the expression, "Who was born by the Holy Ghost, of the Virgin Mary ;" as Augustine afterwards gives the words of the Creed ; and speaks of him as, "by the Spirit and power of God the Father, brought into the womb of the Virgin Mary, and made flesh in her womb, and born of her."

The resurrection of Christ was maintained by the ancients in an orthodox way, according to its own importance, inserting it into the Creed,—“He rose, on the third day,”—to show that he was not three whole days in the grave. Tertullian we have heard saying, “He rose ; I believe it, because it is impossible ;” doubtless meaning that it was so to human power.

But Christ’s ascension to heaven being denied by some heretics, who said he distributed his body to the elements when he rose ;† Irenæus says, “We must believe the fleshly or incarnate reception of Christ Jesus into heaven.”

Clement of Alexandria, exhorting the Gentiles, says, “The Word of God ; this is eternal, Jesus, the one great High Priest, of the one God, who is himself the Father : ‡ he prays for men, and exhorts men. Death crucified unto

* Lib. iii. c. 20.

† Misled by the Septuagint reading, “He placed his tabernacle in the sun.”

‡ Admon. ad Gentes, p. 55. αἰδίδιος οὗτος Ἰησοῦς εἰς ὃ μέγας ἀρχιερεὺς, κ. τ. λ.

life, having snatched man from destruction, and suspended him in the ethereal region."

"Neither, when the divine Word was first preached and not believed; nor when, having taken the person of man, and, formed in flesh, he performed the saving drama of humanity, was he unknown. For he was a genuine hero, and champion of the creature. Most swiftly was he proclaimed to all men, from the Father's will, rising quicker than the sun, he most easily made the Deity shine. He was the covenant-maker, and reconciler, the life-giving, peaceful fountain, poured forth over all the face of the earth; an ocean of good things."*

"Man, bound with sins, the Lord chose to loose again; and clothed with flesh, (divine mystery!) in this, he handled the serpent, and reduced to slavery that tyrant—death. And what was most unexpected, man, him that was deceived by pleasure, and in the bondage of corruption, he, with outstretched hands, liberated and exhibited him to view. O mystic miracle! The Lord stoops, man rises; and he who fell from Paradise receives the greatest reward of obedience—heaven. Wherefore, it seems to me since the Word, reason, itself, came to us from heaven, we have no need to go to human philosophy."† He gave his soul a price of redemption for many. He gave up himself a sacrifice, *ιερείον*, for us. Isaac was saved that the Word might *first* suffer; and laughed, to prefigure the joy with which they should be filled who are redeemed from corruption by the blood of the Lord.‡

Origen is far enough from teaching Celsus the doctrine of atonement with sufficient clearness and fidelity; but he says, "Therefore, the holy Father of Jesus, not sparing his own Son, but delivering him up for us all—he being his pure Lamb—that he might take away the sin of the world, who, for all his, dies—the Lamb of God."§ We,

* Admon. ad Gentes, 51.

† Admon. 51.

‡ Pedag. i. 5.

§ Lib. viii. 405.

deeming him the propitiation for our sins, offer our prayers first to him, as the High Priest.*

The atonement, of which Tertullian rarely speaks, is presented to view when it will serve his argument. He blames the influence given to the martyrs to obtain pardon for the guilty; contending that "it is enough for the martyr to have purged his own sins, who has removed another death by his own; but the Son of God alone died for men: in his very passion he liberated a robber, since for this purpose he had come, that he himself, pure from fault, and holy in all things, might obey for sinners. But if thou art a sinner, how should the oil of thy lamp suffice both for thee and me?"† Thus Septimius repudiates the doctrine of Rome, on the merits of saints as available for others. Against the Jews he contends, that "Christ is called a sacrifice for all nations."‡ And against Marcion, that "he is the Father's intercessor, and the offerer of his own soul for the salvation of the people." He calls Christ, Immanuel, God with us, the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep.§

Cyprian's book concerning the lapsed contains the following testimony: "He alone, who has borne our sins, can obtain pardon for the sins committed against him who suffered for us, whom God delivered up for our sins." "Christ redeemed us by his own blood."|| In the Treatise on Alms, he says: "Christ was wounded, that he might cure our wounds; he served, that he might draw servants to liberty; he bore to die, that he might exhibit immortality to mortals." The Word was made flesh, who bore our sins, who, by conquering, conquered death.¶ The eternal kingdom of God was acquired by the blood and passion of Christ."***

* Contra Cels. lib. viii. p. 386.

+ De Pudic. chap. 22.

† Ibid. chap. 13.

§ De Anima, chap. 13. Adv. Marc. lib. iii. chap. 11.

|| De Oratione Dominica.

¶ Ep. 73, Jubaiano.

*** De Oratione Dominica.

The quantity of writing that we have from Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Tertullian, without any distinct and satisfactory mention of the atonement, or even any mention at all, would surprise those who for the first time read their works, and would grieve all who wish to think well of the fathers. The principal texts which contain the truth they scarcely mention, and especially Rom. iii. 25. The material cross soon became an idol, which hid from their view the sacrifice for sin. Of God's moral government they had imperfect views. Busied with the Greek philosophy, they never studied the rationale of revealed truth, for which some had ample ability, but, unhappily, no inclination.

PART III.—*Election and Grace.*

THE doctrine of the early church on election and grace may be seen by the following extracts. The writer to Diognetus warns him, "Not to expect to be able to learn from man the mystery of Christian piety;"* and asks, "Who that is rightly taught, and *born of the lovely Word*, does not seek to learn fully the things taught by the Word openly to the disciples, to whom the Word appeared, speaking plainly, though not understood by unbelievers, yet explained to disciples? Here is the Scripture doctrine of regeneration by the Word, and the necessity of divine grace to make it known.

Clement addresses the Corinthians, as "called and sanctified by the will of God," seeming to allude to the language of James: "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth." He reminds them that the disturbance in their church was disgraceful to the *elect* of God,† to whom, by the apostles, a great number of the elect had been gathered.‡ He exhorts them "with pious confidence, to stretch out their hands to God, that as a full effusion of the Spirit was granted to them, the number of the elect

* Chap. 11.

+ Chap. 1.

‡ Chap. 6.

might be saved.”* “Let not the chaste in the flesh glory, knowing that it is another who has afforded to him that continence: let us consider of what stuff we were made, what sort of creatures we came into the world, as from the tomb and darkness. He that made and fashioned us brought us into his world, having prepared his benefits before we were born. Holding, therefore, everything from him, we ought, in everything, to give thanks to him, to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”† “Let us join ourselves to the righteous, for these are the elect of God.”‡ “By charity were all the elect of God made perfect.”§

“Loving our mild and merciful Father, who has made (us) his elect portion. For so it is written, when the Most High divided the nations, as he dispersed Adam’s sons, he set boundaries of nations, according to the number of the angels of God.|| For the Lord’s portion was his people, Jacob; the line of his inheritance, Israel. And in another place he says, “Behold, the Lord taketh to himself a nation from the midst of nations, as a man taketh the first-fruit of the threshing-floor, and the Holy of holies shall come from that nation.” The quotation is from the Septuagint, which instead of “the Sons of Israel,” gives “the angels of God,” who seem to have been considered as guardian spirits of the several nations.

Justin, in his first Apology, appealing to Moses and the prophets, as more ancient than the Greek philosophers, says, “Future events, being predicted by the prophets, were not by fatal necessity, though God foreknew what would be done by men.”¶ If the word of God foretels absolutely that some, both of angels and men, will be punished, it is because he foreknew that they would be obstinately wicked. He foretold this, but not that God made them such.** For none of you, I think, will dare to

* εἰς τὸ σώζεσθαι—τὸν ἀριθμὸν τῶν ἐκκληκτῶν αὐτοῦ.—Chap. ii.

+ Chap. 38.

† Chap. 46.

§ Chap. 49.

|| Chap. 29.

¶ Paris, 82.

** Dial. p. 434; Paris, 371.

deny that God was and is acquainted with future things.”* “Do you think, O (Jewish) men, that we could ever have understood these things in the Scripture, unless that, by the will of him that has chosen, we had obtained the grace to understand?”† The language of Augustine is exactly this, that grace is obtained by the will of him that chose us. Yet Justin has been said to lead the way to Pelagianism, by his assertion of the *αὐτεξούσιον*, which some would translate by the unphilosophical phrase, the self-determining power of the will; but it is not certain that he meant anything more than that man determined his own actions, or was a voluntary agent, according to the doctrine of President Edwards on the Freedom of the Will. This, indeed, Justin maintains, as essential to render man “capable of virtue and vice.”

Absolute foreknowledge of men’s unbelief is employed, by Irenæus, to justify God’s giving up Pharaoh and others to blindness.‡ The grace of the Holy Spirit is distinctly confessed by him, when speaking of “many nations of barbarians, who believe in Christ, having salvation written by the Spirit in their hearts, without paper and ink.”§ The free will he teaches, is that which is opposed to the fatalism of the gnostics. Rejecting fate, he seems to go over to the opposite extreme.||

In defence of his own doctrine, Augustine appeals to the fathers before him, and especially to Cyprian. On original sin, he quotes Justin, Irenæus, and Cyprian, charging Chrysostom with incautious language, before Pelagius wrote. The son of Monica had written¶ against the Manichees, as one wounded by them; but when he had been roused by the Pelagians to think more carefully of the doctrine of the church, he wrote his *Retractations*.**

* Dial. p. 169; Paris, 232.

† οἷσθε ἂν ἡμᾶς ποτέ, ὦ ἄνδρες, νενοηκέναι δυνήσθηναι ἐν ταῖς γραφαῖς ταῦτα, εἰ μὴ θελήματι τοῦ θελησάντος αὐτὰ ἐλάβομεν χάριν τοῦ νοῆσαι. Dial. p. 390, Paris, 316

‡ Lib. iv. c. 48.

§ Adv. Hæres., lib. iii. c. 4.

|| Lib. iv. c. 71-2, 76-7.

¶ De ecclesiast. dogmat.

** Lib. i. c. 23.

Of election, the Alexandrian Clement says, "He who is the Lord of all Greeks and barbarians persuades those that are willing; for he forcēs no one to receive the salvation that is from him; for he is able to choose and to accomplish everything by himself, as to receiving the hope."* "For he is the Saviour, not of these, rather than those, but whatever fitness every one has; *he* has distributed his own beneficence, both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, and to those who, out of these, were predestinated, indeed, but according to the proper time are called, and faithful, and chosen. For he who has equally called all would envy none; but he has distributed special honours to those who specially believe.† Gathering those that were already ordained, whom God predestinated, knowing, before the foundation of the world, those that will be just." He calls "the church of the saved, the elect of God."‡

When Clement says, "God persuades those that are willing," he seems to ascribe to him the *agere actum*; but he must be supposed to mean that whoever are willing, God *HAS persuaded* them; for he forces none, being able both himself to choose them, and cause them to choose him. For he is the Saviour, not of these rather than those; for whatever fitness any one has, God has distributed it of his own beneficence.

If we consult this writer, on the nature of faith; he informs us, it is a voluntary anticipation, the consent of piety, or a pious consent.§ The apostle's definition he seems to glance at, for he is not far from "the substance of things hoped for," which is almost equivalent to the anticipation of them; and all agree that there must be a consent of the will when we really believe. This, again, is included in his second definition, the consent of piety; for a man ceases to be impious when he consents to the

* Strom. vii. p. 505. † Ibid. ‡ Ibid. p. 281. Ibid. viii. 549.

§ πίστις δὲ πρόληψις ἐκούσιός ἐστι θεοσεβείας συνκατάθεσις. Strom. ii. 265.

testimony of the gospel. Basil, in a later age, did but expound and illustrate this earlier account of faith; as Augustine also asks, "What is it to believe, except to consent that what is said is true?"*

Clement's disquisition on the voluntariness of faith† has been thought contrary to the Augustinian creed; but he expresses nothing more than any well-informed Augustinian will admit, that the faith which is of the operation of God, by whom it is given to us to believe, is still really the operation of our own mind, without which it could not be said that *we* believe.

Origen says, "Though the knowledge of God is beyond human comprehension; so that men err concerning him; yet by the goodness and philanthropy of God, and his surprising and most divine grace, the knowledge of God reaches those who are predestinated by the foreknowledge of God that they may live in a manner worthy of him that is known."‡

As the post-Nicene fathers confess that their predecessors often exposed themselves to the charge of Arianism, before controversy had sharpened their weapons and taught them prudent skill; so it is equally true that those who wrote on the doctrines of grace, prior to the condemnation of Pelagianism, seemed to lean to that error. Few readers of the earlier fathers would expect such things as are uttered by Augustine. That he was hailed as the champion of the church, the defender of its ancient faith, proves the difficulty, if not impossibility, of discovering from the fathers the creed of the whole church. But while it cannot be denied, that others, beside Origen, prepared the way for Pelagius; it is equally undeniable that they occasionally make such confessions of truth, that Augustine could appeal to the earliest fathers, and that he was regarded as the conservative shield against the attacks

* De Spiritu et Littera.

† Strom. ii. 265.

‡ Cont. Cels. vii. p. 332.

of innovators. To those who suspect that he was driven by force of controversy to the opposite extreme, he says, "We have disputed, long before the Pelagian heresy existed, just as we now dispute against them."* The fatalism of the philosophers and the heretics drove Augustine's predecessors to give a distorted view of Catholic theology, which he professed to set in its true light.

Minucius Felix introduces the subject of fate, or destiny, among the charges brought against Christianity. Cœcilius, the heathen advocate, says, "Blame, or innocence, is attributed to fate by the opinions of most, and this is your opinion; for whatever we do, as others say, it is from fate; so you say it is from God: thus your sects would have, not spontaneous, but elect persons. Therefore you invent an unjust judge, who punishes fate, not will." Octavius replies, "Nor from fate let any one take, either consolation or excuse. The event may be the lot of fortune, yet the mind is free. Therefore the act of the man, not his dignity, is judged. For what else is fate, than what God has pronounced (*fatus est*) concerning every one of us? for as he can foresee the matter, he also determines the fates of individuals, according to their deserts and qualifications. So it is not the nativity, but the nature of our disposition, that is smitten with punishment. But enough concerning fate; or if we have said little, in a temporary manner, we are about to dispute elsewhere, both more maturely and more fully."†

The doctrine of the Christians concerning election, foreknowledge, and predestination, must have been well known to the heathens, even while they were grossly ignorant of much that the church believed and practised. For though the misrepresentations of Cœcilius are a compound of all that is horrible and all that is ludicrous; what he says on election, Octavius virtually admits, merely observing that the explanatory reply was brief and hasty.

* *Retractations*, lib. i.

† *Octav.* c. 36.

because a theme so difficult required a distinct treatise. This promised treatise of fate, either was not written, or the work has perished.

That Christians spoke of themselves and their brethren, as elect, so freely and constantly, that the heathens knew it, and supposed the church deemed her converts not spontaneous, is manifest. Whether we call this the knowledge, or the error, of the heathen, it proves, both the practice of the ancient church which gave rise to the one or the other, and the nonconformity of the ancients to many in the present day who speak (or rather do not speak) of election; so that the world would never learn from them that Christians are elect persons; or suppose that we deemed them, not spontaneous converts, but the fruits of fate.

But as the statements of a pagan may be disregarded, though they often lead to conclusions most stringent, we again recur to what Octavius says in reply. Far from denying that Christians were elected of God, he contends that, however the event may be determined, the mind is free, which is sound doctrine. The Christian disputant admits fate, according to its true etymology, which is what God, *fatus est*, has pronounced, by which it is distinguished from the fate of heathens, who had a mystic notion of something which was not from Jove, but above him, binding Jove himself. Octavius, denying this, maintains that what God has said shall come to pass, which is the Christian doctrine of the decrees of God, "Who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will." But as the apostle says, "that we are elected according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God;" so Octavius contends that God can foresee the matter or the subject of the last judgment, and that he "determines the fates of each individual" according to their deserts and qualifications. If Octavius means nothing more than foreknowledge, and a decree to pronounce

a sentence according to what God foresees every one will deserve, even this involves those consequences for which election is often rejected. But the Christians openly asserted their election, as even the heathens knew. Octavius, indeed, says, "that God will judge men according to their actions, deserts, and qualities," which is strangely supposed to be contrary to the doctrine of election. Yet those who, with the earliest writers, speak of Christians as elect, believe that God will at last condemn none but the wicked, who deserve punishment, and accept none but those that are fit for heaven. The question, then, is, how men come to be righteous or wicked. With regard to the latter, no influence from Heaven is supposed, or required, to make men wicked; but as to the righteous, they say, with the apostle, "By the grace of God I am what I am." Octavius ascribes to this grace the happy efficacy of his discourse in converting Cœcilius; for the praise is given to the God to whom he yields himself. Election consists in being chosen to this conversion or calling. The germ of Augustine's doctrine is thus traced up to Minucius Felix, the first of the unsuspected orthodox Latin fathers, whose well-disciplined mind has produced a work that contains more good sense, and less nonsense, than is to be found among all the writings of the early Latin church. We close with two sentences from Tertullian: "This power of divine grace will be stronger than nature, having the power of the will called *αὐτεξούσιον* subject to itself." * "No one is a Christian without final perseverance." Whatever the fathers meant by *αὐτεξούσιον*, Septimius knew; and he here declares that it is not the master, but the subject of divine grace.

By the reflecting reader it must have been observed, that, what was the current language of the most ancient Christians is now abandoned to those who are termed high Calvinists; for these alone habitually speak of Chris-

* De Anima, c. 21.

tians as God's elect; while those who make their boast of the fathers are the last to employ this phrase. But as the Jews were, by the fact of their isolation, perpetually reminded of the doctrine taught by Moses, that "The Lord had chosen the seed of Abraham out of all people to be his peculiar inheritance;" so the first Christians felt themselves called out of a rejected nation, and, "at this time, a remnant according to the election of grace." These converted Jews being quickly followed by what Peter calls, "a taking out from the Gentiles a people for God's name;" both parties joined to adopt the language of Paul, who speaks of "us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles."

Taught by the fact, Christians spake of their election, as a people that felt rather than understood it; for they had not yet learned to speculate on the profound theme. When, however, Pelagius kindled the flames of controversy, Augustine was furnished by the language of his predecessors with proofs, often more convincing to his contemporaries than those from Holy Writ; that the church having received from the apostles the doctrine of election, had always spoken of herself as called out of the world by a special influence from Heaven, in fulfilment of the eternal purpose of God. But as the effect of Constantine's adoption of the Christian profession became more general and dominant, by confounding the church and the world, the facts of the case being reversed, the doctrine of a church chosen out of the world was lost, denied, or shunned as a dangerous speculation, fit only to make heretics.

PART IV.—*Justification.*

As it is impossible to overrate the importance of the inspired question, "How shall man be just with God?" the correspondent space which the answer occupies in Scripture has, from the first, secured to this theme a large

share of the attention of the church. The very early author of the letter to Diognetus says of God, "He himself gave his own Son a ransom for the unjust, the incorruptible for the corruptible, the immortal for mortals. For what else but his righteousness could have covered our sins? By whom could we, the lawless and impious, have been justified except by the only Son of God? Oh, the sweet exchange! Oh, the unsearchable work! Oh, the unexpected benefits! That, on the one hand, the iniquity of many should be hidden in one just person, and on the other, the righteousness of one should justify many sinners."* The essence of the revealed doctrine is here happily expressed, by a writer who evidently laboured to convey to others his own adoring thoughts of the surprising and inestimable truth.

Of Paul, Clement says to the Corinthians, "He received the noble renown of his faith, having taught the whole world righteousness;"† alluding probably to Paul's declaration that he was a debtor to all men, and not ashamed to preach the gospel at Rome, for therein is the righteousness of God by faith revealed. Clement quotes Paul's words taken from Genesis: "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him unto righteousness. For all (the saints) were glorified and magnified, not for their own sakes, or their works, or the righteous performance which they wrought, but by his own will. We also, therefore, being called by his will in Christ Jesus, are justified, not on our own account; nor by our wisdom, or intelligence, or piety, or works which we have performed in holiness of heart, but by faith, by which the Almighty God justified all those who were from the beginning."‡ Such comments on Abraham, as the grand example of justification by faith, pervade the writings of the earlier fathers, and Clement here accumulates expressions, to

* Cap. 9.

† Cap. 5.

‡ Cap. 32.

exclude everything of our own from the honour which is exclusively due to the righteousness of Christ.

Ignatius addresses the Trallians, as—"having peace, by the flesh, and blood, and suffering, of Christ, our hope, in the resurrection;" as living according to Christ Jesus, who died on our behalf, that, believing on his death, ye might escape death."* Using justified in the forensic, not the catharistic sense, as Paul to the Corinthians;† Ignatius says of his guards, "I am the more instructed by their injuries, yet am I not, therefore, justified,"‡ *i. e.*, this does not constitute my righteousness at the tribunal of God; for he expressly says, "I am instructed as a disciple by their evil conduct; but not by this am I justified."

To the Ephesians: "If you perfectly have towards Christ Jesus the faith and the love, of which (one) is the beginning, and (the other) the end, of life, none of these things is hidden from you. The beginning, indeed, is faith; but the end is love. These two, being in unity, are of God; but all other things that belong to good conduct are consequent. No one, confessing faith, sins; neither does any one that possesses love, hate. The tree is manifested by its fruit; so they who confess they are Christians shall be manifested by their actions."§ Here good works are represented as the fruits that show the root of faith, which is the beginning of the Christian life.

Polycarp tells the Philippians:—"The firm root of your faith, preached from ancient times, continues till now, and bears fruit towards our Lord Jesus Christ, who, for our sins, endured to be appointed even unto death, whom God has raised up, having loosed the pains of Hades. In whom, not having seen, ye believe; but believing, ye rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory, into which (happy state) many desire to enter,

* Cap. 2.

+ 1 Cor. iv. 4.

† Ad Rom. c. 5.

§ Ad Ephes. c. 14.

knowing that by grace ye are saved, not by works, but by God's will, through Christ Jesus."* The free mode of their salvation, and the joy it immediately produced, induced others to long for the same bliss.

Justin Martyr has surprisingly little on this subject, of which the apostles say so much; but to Trypho he thus speaks: "Abraham obtained from God the testimony that he was righteous, not on account of circumcision, but on account of the faith; for before he was circumcised, it was thus spoken concerning him: 'Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him unto righteousness; and we, therefore, in the uncircumcision of our flesh, believing in God, through Christ, and having that circumcision which profits us who have obtained it, even that of the heart, hope to be seen at last just and acceptable to God.'"†

"For Abraham himself, yet being in uncircumcision, was, on account of the faith by which he believed in God, justified and blessed, as the Scripture intimates. But he received the circumcision for a sign, and not for a righteousness. For the female shows this; for God has made both sexes equally acceptable to him."‡

"For not to a bath did Isaiah send you (Jews), there to wash away murder and other sins, which not even all the water of the ocean is sufficient to purge; but, as it seems, this of old was the laver of salvation which accompanied penitents; and no longer, by the blood of goats and sheep, or by the ashes of a heifer, or by offerings of flour, are we cleansed; but by faith, through the blood of Christ, and his death, who died on this account."§ Justin then quotes the 53rd chapter of Isaiah in proof of Christ's dying to bear away our sins, and our being justified by

* Cap. 1.

† Dial. 320, Paris.

‡ Dial. 241, Paris. Here I have, for an obvious reason, departed from my practice of literal translation.

§ Dial. p. 229.

faith in him. This shows what the martyr and others meant when they spake of a laver, and of washing away sins; that it was no literal bath, but, "the cleansing of the soul from sin, by faith, through the blood of Christ, who died for this end."

That piety *followed* the faith by which we are justified, the martyr teaches Trypho: "They, the apostles, being thus persuaded, going forth into the whole world, taught these things. Whence, also, we are steadfast in this faith and doctrine, because we hold this persuasion from the prophets, and from those that we see through all the world become pious, believing on the name of that crucified One."* The piety is represented as following from believing in Christ.

Justin will be thought by some to teach, in the following passage, the doctrine of justification by works: "God accepts those only who imitate the sobriety, righteousness, benevolence, and other virtues which belong to him. He, as being good, made all things of unfashioned matter; for the use of men, whom, if by their works they prove themselves worthy of his design, he will raise above corruption and pain; and will honour them with the privileges of his kingdom."† What believer in Christ for justification would hesitate to say, that God accepts none but those who are brought to resemble him, and that we must be made meet for, or worthy of, the heavenly kingdom? Nor should it be forgotten, that, in presenting to ignorant or prejudiced parties, an apology for our religion, we naturally modify our statements, anxious, perhaps too anxious, to avoid shocking their prejudices. Many expressions of the inspired writers are, by those who cleave to the works of the law, turned against the doctrine of justification by faith; and on the other hand, they who hold this, as a scriptural truth, are aware that they often make statements which the ignorant might think de-

* Dial. 246, Thirl.

† p. 14; Paris, 58.

signed to teach the justifying merit of works. The fathers should have the benefit of all such reflections, when their own words elsewhere can be adduced as proofs of a scriptural faith. That Justin should say little on the subject of justification, in his *Apologies*, was natural, and, perhaps, few of those who hold the truth most firmly would introduce it into such a document; but when he disputed with a Jew, who knew the Scriptures, the apostolic precedent of arguing on the case of Abraham, as father of all who believed in Christ for righteousness, and were justified by faith, is closely followed.

Irenæus bears witness to the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ: "As by the disobedience of one man sin had entrance, and by sin, death; so also, by the obedience of one man, righteousness, being introduced, bears fruit of life to those men who formerly were dead." * "For Abraham had learned from the word of the Lord, and believed in him; wherefore, also, it was reckoned to him unto righteousness, by the Lord; for faith is that which, with the Most High God, justifies man." †

It would be difficult to express more clearly and simply the scriptural truth than in these words, which employ the two great Pauline arguments, the first derived from Adam, the second from Abraham. The apostle observes, that Adam was a figure, or type, of him that was to come, Christ, the second Adam; and that, as by the disobedience of one many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous; and Irenæus merely paraphrases this passage in the *Epistle to the Romans*. The example of Abraham, whom the apostle proves to be the father of believers in all nations, Irenæus employs, to show that faith is that which, with the Most High God, justifies man.

Paul opens his address to the Romans, by declaring that it was the glory of the gospel to have revealed to men

* Lib. iii. c. 31, p. 293.

+ p. 329.

righteousness by faith; and to those who ask, "What news has Christ brought?" Irenæus, after some comments, gives this as the *New Testament*: "The just shall live by faith."* If, however, justification consists in making us just, as to disposition and character, and accepting us in judgment on that account, it is no discovery at all, but the vulgar creed of all men who know not the gospel. That the world, on hearing of the *gospel*, knowing that the word signifies good *news*, should ask *what* news Christ has brought, was natural; but when Irenæus replied, "Righteousness by faith," a host of reflections must be awakened. It should be remembered that this was in the second century, when our religion was yet news to the world, and had to maintain a fierce contest with the ancient faith of nations. The world *accused* it of a pretence to novelty, and called it an upstart that opposed the wisdom of antiquity; the church *gloried* in the confession that her message was news to the world, but exulted that it was good news; on which her opponents turned round and asked, "What news, after all, have you brought?" Now, the answer which any well-informed Christian, in that early age, would return to this question, must be deeply interesting to us; but when Irenæus, who was considered the most curious explorer of all doctrines, publishes that which was the reply of the church to this query from the world; we listen with intense eagerness, and hear that this new thing is, righteousness by faith, which certainly was a novelty. The world had never heard of such a thing as one person being justified, or counted righteous, by believing in another, whose righteousness justifies many. This is still news to men, who never seem to know it till they feel their need of it, and therefore our religion is still gospel, good news. But who does not see the accordance between this answer of Irenæus and Luther's definition of justification by faith, as the *articulus stantis aut cadentis*

* *Advers. Hæres. lib. iv. c. 67, p. 405.*

ecclesiæ, that by which the church stands or falls? Would a Tridentine Romanist have returned such an answer as Irenæus gave to the important inquiry? They who talk most of the fathers would be the last to adopt the language of this very ancient father; for they either shun all mention of justification by faith, or, when it is forced upon their notice, study to explain it away; so that after passing through their laboratory, it comes out, the old pagan doctrine of justification, by moral virtue, or by rites and ceremonies, and is no news at all.

Clement of Alexandria observes: "That virtue (or grace), which contains or includes the Church, is, as the Shepherd (of Hermas) says, faith, by which the elect of God are saved. But the mature (virtue) is temperance, (continence, or self-government;) simplicity, knowledge, harmlessness, respectability, love, follow; for all these are the daughters of faith. What takes the lead is faith; but fear edifies, love perfects."* Faith, then, encloses the whole church, and the elect are saved by it; but love and other graces follow, only as daughters, or the offspring of a saving faith. This is anything but the *fides formata* of Rome. Again: "Abraham was not justified by works, but by faith. It will profit them nothing, therefore, after the end of life, even if they be beneficent, if they have not faith." He then goes on to show that faith requires knowledge of the truth revealed; and adds, "The doctrine of godliness is a gift; and faith, a grace, or gratuitous favour."†

After commenting on the words of the apostle: "Ye are sanctified," Clement proceeds to argue, "Wherefore ye are justified, he says, by the name of the Lord; ye are made, so to speak, righteous by him, as he himself, and by the Holy Spirit, as far as possible, ye are commingled (or mixed up with him). Here the words of Paul are justly interpreted, and the sanctification is kept distinct

* Strom. ii. 281.

† Ibid. i. 211.

from the justification; the latter, being ascribed to the name of the Lord, is said to be complete, so that we are righteous as the Lord himself, who is our righteousness. The reason given for this is, that the Holy Spirit mingles us with Christ, or unites us to him, so that we and he being one, we are, as he is, righteous.* This passage is the more remarkable, in consequence of Clement's heathenism, which would not have led us to expect a confession so clear. Agreeably surprised by finding such a jewel in a dunghill, we envy not those who prefer the dunghill to the jewel.

In another place he quotes the words, "My just one shall live by faith." The Septuagint is here strangely wrong, and Clement as strangely attempts to set it right. The pronoun *my*, which naturally belongs to the word faith, in the version, Clement refers to the person, "My just one," which should have led him to refer the whole to the subject of the proposition, which would then have been, "my just one by faith," instead of joining the faith to the predicate; thus, "shall live by faith." The Hebrew is exactly translated by the apostle: "The just by his faith shall live," which, however, is seldom observed by commentators, whether ancient or modern.

Clement goes on with the mistranslations of the Septuagint. Another prophet says, "If ye will not believe, ye shall not understand;" though Isaiah's words are, "If ye will not believe, ye shall not be established." "But faith," says Clement, which the Greeks calumniate as an empty and barbarous thing, "is a voluntary anticipation, the consent of piety, the substance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen, according to the divine apostle." Here it is observable that the father mars, by his additions, the words of the apostle. Let us again hear the Alexandrine teacher: "For by it, faith, especially, the elders obtained a testimony. But without faith it is

* Strom. vii. 540.

impossible to please God." Here the Christian doctrine of justification by faith is taught after the apostolic manner, by showing that prophets revealed this truth, and ancient saints obtained their triumphs and honourable testimony, by this principle, without which no one is accepted of God.* "Faith is the perfection of doctrine, or discipleship."†

Clement's genius for allegorizing leads him further than even those who now make justification to consist in sanctification. For they are wise enough to be inconsistent with themselves, by admitting that forgiveness is, as the evangelical school contends, a part of justification; though pardon is obviously no part of sanctification or moral renovation. Clement, however, expressly says, "Pardon consists not in remission but in healing." He informs us, "this is seen in the golden calf that Aaron made for Israel;" but *how*, we are left to guess.

The Alexandrian, however, sometimes panders to the Antinomian. For he thus expounds the law: "The decalogue, or ten commandments, by the letter Iota, signifies the blessed name, Jesus, who is the Word;" iota being the Greek numeral letter for ten, and the first letter of the name Jesus. "The fifth commandment, concerning honouring father and mother, speaks plainly, God the *Father* and Lord; but the mother is not, as some (think), the *essence* from which we are born, neither, as others have taught, the church; but divine knowledge and wisdom. The commandment concerning adultery follows; but adultery is, if any one, leaving the ecclesiastical and true knowledge, goes to a wrong opinion.‡ By making the commandments to mean anything and everything, they are made to mean nothing; and an Antinomian could thus expound the law to signify justification by an empty pretence to faith that produces no holy effect; for, in fact, any text could thus be made to mean whatever we please.

* Strom. ii. p. 264-5.

† p. 70.

‡ Strom. vi. 494-5.

This being a part of the true gnosticism, or the esoteric doctrine, derived from the chosen three, Peter, James, and John, shows what the whole is worth.

Truth and error are mingled in the following passage: "Therefore, when we hear, thy faith hath saved thee, not simply believing any how, do we understand it to be said, 'He shall be saved;' except the works follow? But to the Jews alone he spake that word, who were living unblamably according to the law, to whom there was wanting only faith in the Lord. With intemperance, (or incontinence,) therefore, one would not be faithful."* It is true that no faith but that which produces good works justifies; but it is not true that to the Jews alone this doctrine was preached.

Origen proves that it was common among the heathens to reproach Christians for saying, "Thy faith hath saved thee,"† and a good defence of the evangelical doctrine of salvation would have done, not only Celsus, but the heathen world and the Christian church, more good than many of Origen's arguments. What Ruffinus records might be adduced with convincing force; but as it is doubtful how far they are Origen's words, we lay no stress on the following quotation from his comment on the Epistle to the Romans: "We are justified by faith alone without works." Paul did not trust in his own righteousness or chastity; but only in the Lord—that is, in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Huet, as an adherent of the Council of Trent, may be trusted when quoting these expressions; "But if Christ is the righteousness, he who has received righteousness confesses not himself, but Christ."‡

Tertullian often pours out torrents of burning arguments against heretics, scarcely dropping a word of Christian doctrine, to lead them into the way of truth, and on this most important question, our acceptance with God,

* Strom. vi. p. 481.

+ Lib. i. p. 8, vi. 282.

‡ Huet, vi. 287.

he is almost always as dumb as (to use his own words) "little fishes." But his work against Marcion contains the following comment on the Epistle to the Galatians: * "Now, by the liberty of faith, man is justified, not by the servitude of the law; because the just lives by faith, which, if the prophet Abacuc previously announced, you have also the apostle confirming the prophets; as also Christ. Therefore it will be the faith of his God, in which the just shall live, whose, also, was the law, in which he that worketh, is not justified. Therefore, if in the law is the curse; then, in faith, the blessing. *We*, therefore, receive spiritual blessing. By faith, he says, from which, truly, the just shall live, according to the Creator. This is, then, what I say—it is the faith of that God, of whom is the form of the grace of faith. But when he adds, 'Ye all are the sons of faith,' it is shown that there is mention of Abraham, when the apostle affirms that we are sons of Abraham by faith. But how the sons of faith? and of what faith, if not Abraham's? For, if Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him unto righteousness, and from thence, he deserved to be called the father of many nations; then, we, by believing in God, are from thence rather, justified as Abraham, and from thence we obtain life as the just lives by faith." Whether Tertullian quoted from a treacherous memory, or had a copy which contained the words, sons of faith, instead of sons of God, we cannot tell. "Then the law, now the righteousness of God by faith of Christ. He apprises us that the justified by faith of Christ, not by the law, have peace with God. But the law slipped in (subintroivit) that sin might abound. Why? That grace might abound. The apostle denying that a man is justified by the works of the law, but by faith, speaks of the same God who gave the law." †

Against the Jews, Tertullian thus argues on the prophecies of Daniel: "The vision is sealed and the prophecy;

* Lib. v. c. 3.

† Adv. Marc. lib. v. c. 13.

and sins are remitted, which are remitted through faith of Christ's name, to all who believe on him."*

From the master we descend to his disciple, Cyprian: "It is written, that the just lives by faith. If thou art just, thou also livest by faith; if thou truly believest on God, why dost not thou, about to be with Christ, and sure of the Lord's promise, embrace thy calling to Christ, and congratulate thyself that thou art free from the devil?"† "For if Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him unto righteousness, then, whoever believes in God, and lives by faith, is found just, and he is already seen, in faithful Abraham, blessed and justified, as the blessed Apostle Paul proves, saying, 'Ye know, therefore, that they who are of faith, these are sons of Abraham. But the Scripture, foreseeing that God justifies the Gentiles by faith, announced to Abraham that all nations should be blessed in him; whence we find, in the gospel, that, of stones, that is, of Gentiles, are gathered children to Abraham.' But when, in the cup, water is mixed with wine, the people is united to Christ, and the body of believers to him in whom it believes is coupled and joined."‡

Whatever else may be the doctrine of the fathers, it is incontrovertible that they all taught a justification distinct from sanctification, and ascribe the former to faith in Christ, while the latter is too often attributed to causes unsanctioned by the Scriptures. Many dubious expressions are less heterodox than they at first sight appear. The fathers use the word merit, in a vague and general way; for, when Cyprian says, "I have merited mercy," *misericordiam merui*, he quotes the words of the apostle, 1 Tim. i. 13, ἡλέσθην, "I have obtained mercy, or been forgiven." To *acquire*, even gratuitously, is expressed by the word, to merit. Many phrases that speak of satisfying for sins, and purging away sins by good works, refer to

* Adv. Jud. c. 8.

† De Mortalitate.

‡ Ep. 63, Cæcilio.

the satisfaction given to the church, to prove repentance sincere.

The Peshito Syriac, which places us as far as possible in the position of those who listened to the living voice of Christ and his apostles, charms us with the simplicity, fidelity, and felicity, with which it triumphs over the difficulty of transfusing the sense of one idiom into another of remote genius. This version carefully distinguishes between justification and sanctification, religiously appropriating to each its own proper terms; and throwing light on the argument of Paul in the Epistle to the Romans. The fifth verse of the fourth chapter is thus rendered: "To him that worketh not, but believeth only* on him that justifies sinners, his faith is reckoned to him unto righteousness." Luther, therefore, is defended, by this first and best of translators, in introducing the word *only*, for which he has been violently accused. The Epistle to the Galatians cannot be read in the Syriac without producing a conviction that the translator bears witness to the doctrine of justification by faith.

The figurative expression by which it has been attempted to show that faith is not itself our righteousness, but the hand by which we receive the righteousness of Christ, might have been derived from this version; for it employs the Syriac idiom which expresses the instrumental cause, by the word *hand*, saying, "By the hand of faith."†

The Vulgate, a compound of the more ancient version and Jerome's revision, bears ample testimony to justification by faith. Though inferior to the Syriac, it is faithful in preserving the distinction between this doctrine and that with which it has been confounded, sanctification; always employing the appropriate terms for the former, and introducing those for the latter when the Scriptures speak of the consequences and effects of justification on the Christian character. This excellence may be attri-

* ܐܝܢܐ ܕܝܡܝܢܐ

† Rom. iii. 22, Syriac.

butable to the more ancient version which is the basis ; but Jerome's knowledge of Hebrew may have secured him from altering what was so manifestly right.

Our more copious appeal to the fathers, on the doctrine of justification, which the Scriptures have so abundantly taught, and on which subsequent writers often do little more than repeat their arguments in the same words, may appear to be like turning from the original voice to the mere echo. But though, on other points, echo is often dumb, and sometimes when she speaks, she lies ; on this, she responds with so much fidelity, clearness, and force, that it was desirable she should be heard. For not only is the doctrine of so much importance that we have heard Irenæus declare to the heathen, " That justification by faith is that one new thing which our religion has revealed to the world, and for which it deserves to be called, gospel, good news ;" but, alas ! it is also precisely the one which the apostate church has dared to alter, in defiance of the fathers and of her own version. The decree of the Council of Trent impiously confounds justification and sanctification, with the insidious design of making men dependent upon her for both.*

* The doctrine of this section has been more fully discussed by the author, in his Treatise of " Justification, as revealed in Scripture, against Mr. Newman and the Council of Trent." Mr. Faber's " Primitive Doctrine of Justification" carries the testimony of the fathers down to the year 403, with a reference to Bernard, in the twelfth century.


Hilary might have been added, for he affirms that " faith alone justifies." Comm. on Matt. c. viii.

LECTURE IV.

OF THE CHURCH, ITS OFFICERS, AND WORSHIP.

HERE, the nearer the fountain, the purer the streams ; for the earliest fathers are the most scriptural, and those who follow are borne down by the current of the times, rather than guided by principles well ascertained ; as will be seen by what they say.

PART I.—*Of the Nature or Constitution of a Church.*

The Greek word *ἐκκλησία*, which the New Testament, after the Septuagint, employs, and which we translate *church*, was *adopted* by the Latins, who derived sacred terms, as well as ideas, from the Greeks. To them the word being in familiar use, was known to signify, like the  of the mother church at Jerusalem, a congregation. This idea pervades all the earliest ecclesiastical writings, though translations have frequently misled their readers.

Of the minimum, or smallest number that may form a church, the fathers have been led to speak, by the promise of the Redeemer, to be wherever two or three assemble in his name. The Alexandrian asks, “ Who are these two or three ? Does he not mention husband, wife, and son ? ” * This mystifying question alludes, probably, to “ the church in thy house.” Tertullian affirms, “ Where there are three, there is a church, even though they are laics ”

* Strom. iii. p. 331.

+ De Exhort. Cast. cap. 7. “ Sed ubi tres, ecclesia est, licet laici.”

In the third century, then, the people were the church, in distinction from the ministers.

The earliest fathers follow the Scriptures in speaking of the church *in a place*; for a departure from primitive ideas is betrayed by the church *of a city*; and the church of a nation is a comparatively modern phrase. The earliest ecclesiastical epistle commences thus: "The church of God which sojourneth at Rome, to the church of God which sojourneth at Corinth."* Ignatius and Polycarp address the churches *in* various cities; and Irenæus mentions, "that which is in any place."† In the third century, Origen refers Celsus to "the church which is in Athens, and to that in Corinth, and in Alexandria."‡

The maximum, beyond which a church cannot go, without destroying its very nature as a congregation or assembly, is scarcely definable; but the fathers retained the primitive language long after they had lost the true idea. Hesychius gives no other synonymes for ἐκκλησία than σύνοδος, συναγωγή, πανήγυρις; all signifying assembly, meeting, or congregation. Tillemont, a zealous Romanist, learned from the fathers to speak of the congregations of the faithful as "the catholic churches;" and the modern practice of calling the building a church is a witness to the ancient idea, that each assembly accustomed to meet in one place is a church; for so deeply rooted and so incontrovertible is this truth, that those communions which have abandoned it most completely, have been compelled to bear witness to it. Father Paul Sarpi in the church of Rome, Mosheim a Lutheran,§ Campbell of the Scotch church, and the 19th Article of the English establishment, all agreeing that a church is a congregation of the faithful.

* Clemens Romanus.

† Lib. ii. c. 56. Ea quæ est in quoquo loco ecclesia.

‡ Lib. iii. ἡ Ἀθήνησι, p. 128.

§ Omnes ecclesie primæ ætatis independentes. Mosheim. de Rebus Christianorum ante Const. Mag. Sec. prim. p. 481.

The church at Corinth, from its early importance and long standing, might have been expected to extend beyond one congregation when Clement thus addressed it: "Let us, being gathered in concord into the same place, in conscience, as with one mouth, cry to him," *i. e.* God.* "Be all, together in the same place with undivided heart," says Ignatius to the Philadelphians.† "One altar, as one bishop."‡ "He that comes not together to the same place has judged himself."§ Justin says—"We bring the convert there where those that are called brethren are collected, making common prayers: All the people consents, saying, Amen."||

Clement of Alexandria informs us—"I call a church, not the *place*, but the *collection*, congregation, of the elect."¶ "Another instruction is useful; the reading of the Lord's Scriptures, necessary for the demonstration of the things spoken, and especially if the auditors have come from the Greek school. Such a church David describes: 'At thy right-hand stood the queen, clothed with wrought gold.'"⁷ Here the church is a congregation gathered for instruction and hearing the Scriptures read. When Origen contrasts the quiet church of God at Athens, with the riotous ἐκκλησία, meeting, of the Athenians, we are reminded of Demosthenes reproving the assembly for its tumultuous deportment.††

A plurality of assemblies the early fathers call churches, as in Scripture we never meet with the church of a province, but "the churches of Judea or Galatia," and, "the churches of God." If, trusting to translations,

* Καὶ ἡμεῖς οὖν ἐν ὁμονοίᾳ ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ^a συναχθέντες τῇ συνειδήσει ὡς ἐξ ἑνὸς στόματος βοήσωμεν πρὸς αὐτόν. c. 34.

† Cap. 6. ‡ Cap. 4. § Ad. Ephes. c. 5. || Apol. i. 95, Paris 97.

¶ Strom. vii. 514. οὐ γὰρ νῦν τὸν τόπον, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἄθροισμα τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν ἐκκλησίαν καλῶ.

** Strom. vi. 475-6.

†† Contra. Cels. lib. iii. p. 129.

^a See Acts ii. 1, Greek.

we suppose Ignatius speaks of "the church of Syria,"* this would only be a proof that a modern hand was here, for such an expression never occurs in the highest antiquity; but the original says—"The church which is in Syria,"† meaning, probably, that at Antioch. Even the church of Ephesus, which we find in Wake's translation, is not in the original, where we read, "through the Ephesians most worthy of bliss."‡ Again; the church of Antioch which is in Syria, is Wake's version; but the words of Ignatius are, "The church which is in Antioch, of Syria."§ The same error occurs in the Epistle to the Philadelphians,|| where "the deacon of Cilicia" violates all ancient ideas; but the true reading is, "deacon from Cilicia,"¶ and coming from Cilicia, does not make him deacon of Cilicia. Ignatius tells Polycarp, "I have not been able to write to all the churches,"** and informs the Philadelphians, that "the nearest churches had sent bishops, but some sent presbyters and deacons."††

What is called the church universal is thus presented to us by the fathers. "There is one only, a virgin-mother," says the Alexandrian; "I love to call her, church. Convoing her children, she nourishes them with holy milk, the word or discourse for babes."‡‡ Speaking of the heresiarchs, as leaders of congregations, later than the catholic or universal church, he observes: "I think it is manifest there is one true church, which is really ancient, into which they are gathered who are righteous according to (God's) purpose, into the unity of one faith, according to their own covenants, or rather according to one covenant at different times, by the will

* To the Trallians, Wake's Translation, c. 13.

† τῆς ἐν Συρίᾳ ἐκκλησίας.

‡ δι' Ἐφεσίων τῶν ἁγιομακαρίστων. Ad. Rom. c. 10.

§ Ad Philadel. c. 10. τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τὴν ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ τῆς Συρίας.

|| Chap. 11.

¶ περὶ δὲ Φίλωνος τοῦ διακόνου ἀπὸ Κιλικίας.

** Chap. 8.

†† Chap. 10.

‡‡ Pæd. lib. i. p. 76.

of one God, through one Lord, having gathered those that were already appointed, whom God predestined, knowing before the foundation of the world who will be just."*

The first use of the term catholic exhibits a congregational church: "Wherever the bishop appears, there let the multitude be; as wherever Jesus Christ may be, there is the catholic church."† As *catholic* is a Greek word, it is natural that it should first occur in the Greek church; though it has, in spite of its native country, been seized and claimed as the exclusive property of the Latins. If the parallel is worth anything, it proves that, as Christ's presence in the midst of the general assembly of all Christians constitutes a church universal, so the church particular is one assembly convened with the bishop in the midst. The whole number of these churches constituted the ἐκκλησία καθ' ὅλην τὴν οἰκουμένην, the church catholic and œcumenic.

Having viewed the two extremes, a single congregational church, and the aggregate of them, the catholic or universal church; the grand question now occurs, was there originally any intermediate idea? Have the earliest fathers given the name of a church to a number of Christians so large, that it did not ordinarily, because it could not, meet for worship in one place? Or was that called a church which would now be termed a diocese, consisting of several congregational churches or assemblies?

That no such extension of the idea is to be found in Scripture is not here to be proved; but almost identical is the assertion, that it never occurs in the writings of the first century, which being few, we extend our inquiry into the second and third. If this enlargement of the original meaning of the word church is to be found at all, it must

* Strom. vii. 549.

† Ignatius ad Smyrn. c. 8.

be in relation to the metropolitan churches at Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, Carthage, or Alexandria.

The church at Jerusalem is not so well known as we could wish ; but it is, during the whole period of which we write, always exhibited as one congregation. At Rome, an immense city, the Christian church having been early formed, might be supposed to have enlarged beyond a single congregation, before the end of the first century, when, however, Clement wrote a letter in its name, as one assembly. Justin Martyr, in the middle of the second century, describes it as one ; Minucius Felix gives no hint of more than one, nor does Tertullian ; and even Cyprian, in the middle of the third century, seems to know of no more than one assembly at Rome.

This may excite surprise, and may to many seem incredible. But who needs to be informed that there are myriads of facts, recorded in history and believed by all sound reasoners, which *à priori* arguments would have pronounced fables ? The reasons which render the whole affair credible and natural are often hidden in the darkness of a remote age. But Hug, a candid Catholic writer on biblical criticism, thinks, that the decree of Claudius, which banished all Jews from Rome, swept away those who formed almost the whole Christian church, (as we know it expatriated Aquila and Priscilla ;)* and that, when Paul wrote to the Romans, the Christians were but beginning to reassemble.† This hypothesis throws welcome light on several texts in the most important of all the epistles. The eye of a persecuting emperor, therefore, exposed a church, in the seat of government, to the first fury of the storm ; exiled or martyred its bishops ; and for a long time, kept its numbers down far below what we should have expected.

* Acts xviii. 2.

† Hug's Introduction to the Writings of the New Testament ; on the Epistle to the Romans.

Antioch, the capital of Syria, where the disciples of Jesus, attracting by their numbers the public attention, were first called Christians, is shown by the letters of Ignatius, to have had, in the second century, but one congregation of the faithful. It was still one in the days of Theophilus. When its bishop, Paul of Samosata, was, towards the end of the second century, deposed, he refused to resign the church's house, not houses, ἐκκλησίας οἶκον.*

Carthage was a kind of African Rome, and enjoyed the services of the most eminent men; but both Tertullian and Cyprian speak of only one congregation, which chose its bishop, Cyprian, by public acclamation in the third century. Alexandria, an immense city, the seat of what may be called the first Christian university, contained, in Origen's time, but one congregation. It was not till the end of the third century that we read of Christians in the extreme suburbs of a city in Egypt, having separate places, not called churches, but συναγωγαί, synagogues; and not for meetings on the Lord's day, but on Wednesdays and Fridays, when they convened for prayer,† or held prayer meetings.

All this is, indeed, surprising; but some of the reasons we can assign, though many others are probably unknown. A general law against the Christians was always hanging over their heads; and when no universal persecution prevailed, local magistrates suffered them to be oppressed, so that during the first three centuries their assemblies were frequently dispersed. Many of the first Christians were servants and even slaves, who could not meet with the church when they pleased; and, of those in better circumstances, a large proportion were females under the power of husbands or fathers, who hated the Christian name. The Lord's day not being consecrated to religion, Christ's disciples were even then compelled to carry on business, instead of assembling for worship. From these

* Euseb. lib. vii. c. 30.

† Ibid. c. 11.

and many other causes, the number of Christians was kept low, and a whole church seldom, if ever, met at one time; and ordinarily, perhaps, not more than a tithe of them were present.

As there was originally but one church formed in each place, whether city or village; when they became too numerous for one congregation, they were naturally reluctant to separate into more, and the bishop, as naturally, wishing to keep the whole charge to himself, gave to separation the name of schism. Augustine was distinguished by his readiness to form new churches under their own bishops. But as in small villages there were bishops,* they assembled by hundreds,† as the lists of the councils show. These chorepiscopi, or country bishops, were afterwards suppressed; for the avowed purpose of maintaining the honour of the episcopal title, by confining it to those who had the care of churches in large places, where population, with its wealth, could give dignity and importance to the bishop. The Council of Sardica thus decreed "that the name and authority of bishops should not be brought into contempt."

"Let him that readeth understand." Wherever there was a church, there was a bishop; and wherever there was a congregation, there was a church. There were as many bishops, therefore, as Christian congregations, and, consequently, many poor bishops; because pastors of village churches. Though this raised no blush on the cheeks of those who remembered that God had chosen the poor of this world; when, as religion declined, episcopal pride increased, the bishops of the cities, by their own decree, without any pretence to scriptural right, laid violent hands on hundreds or thousands of churches, and killed them outright. They were no longer independent

* See a list of the African bishops prefixed to Cyprian's works.

† Bingham shews 400 bishops in two dioceses of the Empire. Book ii. c. 12, § 2.

churches with their own bishops, for these were unbishoped, pronounced in the ninth century no bishops at all; and their charges, or flocks, unchurched, become nondescript things, for which neither the Scriptures nor the earliest fathers furnish a name. From primaries, shining by their own light, they were made secondaries, reflecting the glory of some civic luminary, who boasted of being called of God as was Aaron, and, like him, possessing a rod that swallowed up all competitors. This aggrandisement of the episcopal rank it would be difficult to overrate; but with what face could the diocesan bishops afterwards complain of a patriarch, or pope, for attempting to swallow them up in their turn? Modern days have heard loud complaints of the presumption of parliaments in cutting up bishoprics, annihilating the old, and fabricating new ones; and on the right, or justice, we give no opinion; but ministers of state may say to bishops, "Who set us the example?" If these reply, "But we complain of it as an act of the state;" secular men may ask, "In what text of Scripture, or sentence from an early father, can you prove even the right of *bishops* to annihilate others?" Let both church and state remember that the power which can do this to one can do it to all.

There is, however, one bright spot in this wholesale extinction of bishops and churches. It was honest. For this thing was not done in a corner. No hypocritical mask was worn by the actors; for they tell us plainly how and why they did the deed. By a synodical decree, to enhance the honour of the bishops, the poor ones were put out of the way. Here let the reader pause and meditate; for volumes of instruction lie open to his view. If a church and a bishop may be annihilated because they belong to a village, has not Rome advanced far towards the day when her church and bishop may cease to be? She is even now a village compared to her former self; and if protestants, chiefly English, should cease to spend

in her their gold, another council may decide that a chorepiscopus ought no longer to exist.

The materials of which the church is composed, or the qualities that constitute a genuine member, are thus expressed:—"But the virtue which embraces the church, as the Shepherd (of Hermas) speaks, is faith, by which the elect of God are saved."* Here is a reference to one *supposed* to be so early as the Hermas of Paul. Clement of Rome addresses the church of the Corinthians as "elect, sanctified by the will of God." Polycarp, too, assumes that the church of Philippi was composed of such persons. Ignatius writes to the Trallians as "elect, having peace through the flesh and blood of Christ;" to the Romans as "illuminated through the will of God;" to the Philadelphians as "rejoicing in the sufferings of our Lord;" and to the Smyrnæans as "filled with faith and love."†

Justin Martyr describes a Christian society as consisting of holy men. Irenæus says, "Where the church is, there is also the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God, there is the church and all grace, but the Spirit is truth."‡ Origen tells Celsus, "There are everywhere instituted (arranged in polities§) churches, (assemblies, or congregations), opposite to the churches, or congregations, of the superstitious and wicked." "Many such are arranged everywhere in the churches of the cities.|| They are as lights in the world. Who would not confess that even the worst of those that are of the church are better than those assemblies among the people?"

A church, consisting of the indiscriminate mass of a nation, where the great majority have no semblance of Christian character, would have astounded the early fathers; though their successors were by degrees fami-

* Strom. ii. 281.

† The Salutations to the Epistles of Ignatius.

‡ Lib. iii. c. 40. § ἀντιπολιτευόμενας. || Contra Celsum, lib. iii. 128-9.

liarized, but not always reconciled, to the mischievous perversion of terms. If we adopt the most moderate hypothesis, and give the name of a church to a society that has a majority of its members visibly answering to the scriptural description of a Christian, even though they should not excommunicate the wicked, which, however, would anciently have unchurched them; still we could not make the best nation upon earth and a Christian church commensurate; for no country has ever yet been able to show that a majority of its inhabitants were real Christians.

In the earliest writers no trace is found of the modern practice which appropriates the term saint to certain eminent persons, and confines it to those of the New Testament. We are familiar with St. Paul and St. Ignatius, but should start and smile, or frown, at St. Aaron, or St. Noah; though we read in Scripture of "Aaron, the saint of the Lord," and Job says, "To which of the saints will you turn?" But anciently, "*ἅγιος*, saint, was associated with *πιστός*, faithful, or believer," just as in Scripture we read of "the saints and faithful brethren in Christ Jesus." The change has arisen from sinful causes, and produces guilty consequences; professed Christians, ceasing to be holy, have been contented to compliment a few with a title which ought to apply to all.

PART II.—*The Officers of the Church.*

The original officers of the church, now strangely transformed, will require minute investigation; and as the deacons were first appointed, we commence with an inquiry into the view which the early church entertained of their office, which was, however, so combined with that of bishop, that it will be difficult to keep them distinct.

Clement, the earliest known writer, makes a remarkable appeal to the original appointment of both, saying, to the Corinthians, "The apostles, preaching through countries

and cities, constituted their first fruits, having proved them by the Spirit, for bishops and deacons of those that should believe. And this, not as a novelty; for, from many ages, it was written concerning bishops and deacons. For so the Scripture somewhere says, "I will appoint their bishops in righteousness, and their deacons in faith."*

It is observable that, only two kinds of officers are here mentioned, and that these are supposed to have been anciently destined for the Christian church, and promised to it by the Spirit who inspired the prophets. Of the wisdom that so applied the prophecy, we are not now called to speak; but as this interpretation is not peculiar to Clement, we learn that the two orders of bishops and deacons were all that the ancient church pretended to find promised in the Old Testament, and introduced by the apostles into the Christian church. This most ancient writer evidently attaches great importance to the portion of his letter under consideration; for it is the essence of the whole, and he attempts to strengthen himself by an appeal to prophecy.† If he did not quote from memory, it is difficult to say what text he employed. The original Hebrew is out of the question as an authority for the use made of the prophecy, which has, probably, been dislocated by transcription. The most literal rendering of the Hebrew would be, "I will place thine inspection, peace, and thine exactors, righteousness." But the abstract is put for the concrete, which must be translated thus: "I will make thine inspectors, *i. e.*, the curators of the city, peaceful men; and thine exactors, (tax-gatherers,

* Οἱ ἀπόστολοι . . . Κατὰ χώρας οὖν καὶ πόλεις κηρύσσοντες, καθίστανον τὰς ἀπαρχὰς αὐτῶν, δοκιμάσαντες τῷ πνεύματι, εἰς ἐπισκόπους καὶ διακόνους τῶν μελλόντων πιστεῦειν. καὶ τοῦτο οὐ καινῶς· ἐκ γὰρ δὴ πολλῶν χρόνων ἐγγέγραπτο περὶ ἐπισκόπων καὶ διακόνων. Οὕτως γὰρ ποῦ λέγει ἡ γραφή· Καταστήσω τοὺς ἐπισκόπους αὐτῶν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ, καὶ τοὺς διακόνους αὐτῶν ἐν πίστει. Clem. ad Cor. c. 42.

† Isaiah lx. 17.

or policemen,) righteous persons." The Septuagint says, "I will give thy rulers in peace, and thy overseers in righteousness;" the order of the officers having, probably, been accidentally reversed. Though the word usually rendered bishops in the New Testament is employed, the Alexandrian translators evidently had in view, not the Christian church, but a city, with its archons, or rulers, and its tax-gatherers, or inspectors of the police; just as Isaiah spoke of a city with its walls, and gates, and civil governors; for under this figure he prophesied of the church, of which the translators were ignorant. There certainly are no deacons mentioned in the present copies of the Septuagint; nor should the word bishop be employed in an English version; for the Seventy intended civil, not ecclesiastical officers. The Greeks had, indeed, their civil *ἐπισκόποι*, inspectors, bishops; but we have appropriated the latter term to ecclesiastical use. Yet this prophecy Clement dragged in, to give authority to the officers of the church, of whom he mentions but two sorts. "The apostles were sent to us with glad tidings from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ from God. They were both orderly from the will of God. By the Holy Spirit they came, preaching that the kingdom of God was coming."* Then follows the passage we have quoted. Here the fidelity of the apostles, in appointing bishops and deacons, is compared with that of Christ in appointing apostles; and though no prophecy is adduced in support of the apostolic office, an attempt is made to prove that the Spirit foretold the appointment of bishops and of deacons. Moses also is quoted, as "a faithful servant in all his house, who set down in holy Scripture all things that were commanded him;" and his conduct in defence of Aaron is detailed, in a way that shows how early the analogies of the Old Testament were so employed as to convey to readers whatever may have been the notions of

* Chap. 42.

the writer. Clement equally adduces the analogy of an army with its officers.

In the following chapter * he says, " Our apostles knew also, by our Lord Jesus Christ, that there would be strife about the *name* of the episcopate, overseership, or bishopric.† On this account, having perfect foreknowledge, they appointed the forementioned persons." With all this labour, no more than two kinds of officers are said to be of divine appointment, and one of these is the deacon. Here the fathers are in perfect harmony with the Scriptures, where we find deacons first appointed, then bishops; and where the directions given to Timothy and Titus enjoin only the two orders of bishops and deacons. Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians contains the following words: " Likewise the deacons unblameable before his righteousness, as deacons of God in Christ, and not of men." The younger men he exhorts to be subject to the presbyters and deacons, as to God and Christ. Here, again, there are but two offices; though, for the bishop, in Clement's letter, we find the presbyter in that of Polycarp, who mentions not the word bishop, though he addressed the various classes of the church, as being " subject to the elders, or presbyters, and deacons, as unto God and Christ."‡

In the epistles of Ignatius, there is no want of regard for the bishop; but still we find the deacon placed in apposition with the bishop: " Concerning my fellow-servant, Burrhus, your most blessed deacon, according to God. I pray that he may remain to the honour of you and the bishop."

In the Epistle to the Magnesians, we meet, for the first time, with three orders, in the following modest language: " The bishop presiding in the place of God, and the presbyters in the place of the council of the apostles, and

* Chap. 44.

† ὅτι ἔρις ἔσται ἐπὶ τοῦ ὀνόματος τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς.

‡ Ad Philip. c. 5.

the deacons entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ.”* Whether the writer, whoever he was, knew what he meant by these last words, we cannot say. Of the exact nature of the office of deacon, our present theme, we can learn but little from the ancients; but Ignatius gives a hint to the Trallians: “The deacons, as being the ministers of the mysteries of Jesus Christ, must every way please all; for not of meats and drinks are they deacons, but ministers of the church of God. They ought therefore to guard against accusations as against fire.”†

The Lord's Supper began now, it seems, (if we have given the true sense of the text,) to be called by the heathen name of mysteries, for which there is no warrant in Scripture. It was natural that the deacons—who were in the first instance appointed to serve tables, not only those where money was counted out to the poor, but that of the Lord's Supper, for which they were to provide, and at which they were to wait, as their name, in the Greek, signifies waiters—should be pronounced, not ordinary waiters at tables, where men eat and drink; but ministers of the church of God. Lastly, being entrusted with the money contributed by the church, they are told that they “should dread accusations” (of embezzling the property of the church) “as they would dread fire.” Here the Scriptural idea of the office, as applying to the temporalities of the church, to relieve the ministers of the word from this unseemly charge, is still preserved.

That the deacons soon became ecclesiastics, or teachers of religion, is a curious fact, that shows how quickly men contravene the designs of God. Because the apostles would not leave the Word of God, to serve tables, they directed the people to choose from among themselves persons to manage their business, saying, “We will give

* Chap. 6.

† Chap. 2.

ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word." But the very means they adopted for a noble purpose, of lasting use, are made to defeat the end; for deacons, appointed to serve the tables, were soon made ministers of the word. Had this occurred in the days of the apostles, would they not have said, "Why have you conspired to destroy the evidences of our discretion and sincerity? We pronounced it not right that the ministers of the word should be also the ministers of the purse; which we delivered over to officers whom you should choose from among yourselves; and you have rendered the whole arrangement null. For if you make the ministers of the purse the ministers of the word, is it not the same as if we had made the ministers of the word the ministers of the purse? Thus you have deprived the church, and especially the ministers of the gospel, of one of the highest honours, the evidence of pure motives and superiority to the love of money. We separated the pecuniary from the spiritual affairs, and you have blended them again, leaving the world to suspect that we employed the profession of a heavenly, to gain an earthly kingdom." The bishops early took from the deacons the administration of the ecclesiastical funds; and as these were, at Rome, immensely large, and were liberally employed, they at length created a Pope. After a change so inexcusable and so fatal, what further alterations may we not expect?

Justin Martyr exhibits the deacons as serving tables, not preaching the word:—"Those who are called among us deacons, give to every one of those present to partake of the bread, and wine, and water; and they carry to those that are absent."*

Irenæus refutes those who affect to doubt that the appointment of deacons was recorded in Acts, vi., which some have denied, in order to leave the nature of the

* 1 Ap. p. 96, Paris 97.

office uncertain, that they might make of it what they pleased.*

Of the office of the bishop we must now hear what the fathers say. It cannot be denied that the Scriptures often identify the presbyter and bishop; but do they ever distinguish the two offices? In the Acts of the Apostles we read, that "Paul sent from Miletus for the elders of the church at Ephesus, and addressed them as made by the Holy Ghost bishops;" though our English version keeps out of sight that word, and calls them overseers, which is, indeed, the signification of the Greek word, usually translated bishop. Our translators had already displayed an undue solicitude to introduce the word bishop, even in the case of Judas Iscariot, saying, "His bishopric let another take;" though the office of bishop had not then been instituted. The Christian church must be dated from the time that the Spirit was poured out, to create its constituent elements; and who would think of the officers of a body not yet in existence? But, because an *apostle* was mentioned, though that apostle was Judas, the

* The Proæmial Dissertations to an edition of Chrysostom on the priesthood attempt to prove that deacons were originally intended to be ministers of the word, and by what arguments? Because the first deacons were to be men full of the Holy Ghost and of faith! As if the apostles had not expressly declared that this was to qualify them for serving tables, that the twelve might not leave the word of God for a pecuniary administration; and as if an affair which had created the first murmuring in the church did not require eminently religious men. But it is said, "the first deacons preached." The Acts shew that any Christian who is able may preach, and the fathers prove that this right was not at first denied. Besides, the deacons are exhorted, by using their office well, to purchase to themselves a good degree, which is supposed to mean promotion to the ministry of the word, which the deacons frequently obtained. It is not improbable that the first deacons, improved by their office, afterwards become pastors, or ministers of the word, as we read of Philip the evangelist. We soon find, however, the bishops exercising that care of the poor which was committed by the apostles to the deacons; nor is any apology made for this early unscriptural alteration of the ecclesiastical polity. Later writers shew that the scriptural idea of the deacon's office was long retained.

opportunity was seized to make his successor a bishop, even in a quotation from the Old Testament, where our own version of the Psalms says, "His office let another take." This is a standing witness against the unfair tampering with the word of God; for in a quotation the words of the Old Testament were required. The vicious inconsistency of the translation of Acts xx. 28, also, defeats its own end; for instead of concealing, it proclaims the unwelcome truth, that the original conveys an idea which it was deemed convenient to keep out of sight—that the same persons who are in one verse termed presbyters, are in a following called bishops. Nor is this a singular case; for Peter says, "The elders who are among you I exhort. Feed the flock of God, taking the episcopate willingly, episcopising, or doing the work of a bishop."* Thus also Paul addresses Titus:—"Ordain elders, or presbyters, in every city, if any be blameless; for a bishop must be blameless."

We find bishops, in the *plural*, addressed, along with deacons, in an inspired letter to the church of Philippi; and, on the other hand, we see even there, only two kinds of officers, bishops and deacons, without presbyters. In the same manner, only two are mentioned in that first letter to Timothy which all acknowledge to be of great importance in the determination of this question. Directions are given for the choice of the bishop and the deacons;† and though even women are introduced, and the several ages are specified, presbyters are not mentioned.

There is, then, no authority in Scripture for presbyters as an order distinct from bishops. We have seen that Clement of Rome presents to view but two offices, when he says, "The apostles appointed the first-fruits of their labours to be bishops and deacons;" in which Irenæus

* 1 Peter v. 1.

† Chap. 3.

concurs.* What, then, it may be said, is the reason for employing the term presbyter, or elder, at all? We might as well ask, why mention bishops at all?

These fathers, Clement and Irenæus, agreeing with the Scriptures in acknowledging but two kinds of officers, first, deacons, and secondarily, bishops, called also elders, or presbyters; the question that next occurs is, "What say the inspired and uninspired witnesses concerning the number of these officers in each church?" Seven deacons were at first appointed; but this number has seldom been thought binding, except where the church or the poor were so numerous as to require seven; though history informs us that some thought there should be exactly seven deacons, and when more were needed, sub-deacons were invented. In the church at Rome, indeed, we find seven deacons, at least in name. A plurality of deacons always appears both in the Scriptures and in ecclesiastical writings; so that there is no question on this point.

The number of bishops in a church has given rise to much debate. As the church at Ephesus had more than one elder, the apostle addresses them in the plural, as bishops. And it has been thought that plurality is intimated when we read that "they ordained elders† in every city;" while we are sure that Paul writes to the bishops, as well as to the deacons, of the church in Philippi.

On the other hand, the language of Scripture often leads to the conclusion that it was not the design of Christ to require a plurality of bishops in every church. For this officer is mentioned in the singular, when the deacons are spoken of in the plural.‡ The argument of

* *Tales presbyteros nutrit ecclesia de quibus et propheta ait; et dabo principes tuos in pace et episcopos tuos in justitia*, lib. iv. c. 44.

† This may mean that they ordained elder members to be bishops; and as every city is mentioned, the plurality of bishops may refer to the plurality of churches.

‡ 1 Tim. iii. 2, 8.

the apostle, derived from the father of a family, as Clemens Alexandrinus observes, leads to the same conclusion : “ A bishop must rule well his own house, having his children in subjection, with all gravity ; for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God ? ” * Here a single ruler is supposed to preside in the church, as in a family. In the Revelation, the *seven* stars are the angels, as Origen observes, or presidents of the *seven* churches. The term pastor supposes one shepherd over one flock. But that there *may* be more than one bishop to one church is manifest, from the other passages adduced ; and it is probable that, at first, this practice most frequently obtained, not only on account of the abundance of gifts bestowed to fit men for the work of the ministry ; but also on account of the persecutions which usually fell upon the bishops ; and when the most conspicuous was removed, it was desirable that another should be left to watch over the flock. Nor should it be forgotten that the first churches were designed to be the parents of others ; so that while one bishop was presiding over the church first formed, another pastor would go into the vicinity to form a new church, which might detain him permanently to watch over those to whom he was a father in God. Clement reminds the Corinthians, “ Ye walked in the statutes of God, being subject to your rulers or guides, and yielding due honour to the presbyters or elders among you.” Here is one church or congregation, but no monarchy ; for there is a plurality of rulers or guides, and of presbyters too, whether these are the same as the rulers, or different officers. Wake, in his translation, makes the presbyters mere seniors or elder men ; induced, perhaps, by the subsequent mention of the young. But the preceding reference to the rulers is far more decisive in favour of office ; and Clement exactly coincides with Peter, who refers to the young, after ad-

* Ver. 4, 5.

dressing the presbyters or elders who episcopised over the flock.*

But whether the elders were officers or not, the guides or rulers, *ἡγουμένοι*, are in the plural;† and as their title expresses authority, they are, doubtless, the bishops of whom Clement says Isaiah prophesied, though they presided over one congregation. But that Clement considered the presbyters as the rulers is clear, when he says, "It is a great shame that the most firm and ancient church of the Corinthians should, through one or two persons, rebel against the presbyters."‡ "Be subject to the presbyters."§ Polycarp says to the Philippians, "Let the presbyters be compassionate—inspecting, as an overseer or bishop, all the weak."|| There were, both at Corinth and Philippi, therefore, either no bishops at all,

* 1 Peter v. 1—5.

† Though Henry Wotton, in his preliminary dissertation to Clement's Epistle, attempts to prove that the rulers were the bishops, and that presbyters were different persons; if, instead of presbyters, Clement had said bishops, would not Wotton have considered this as exegetical? We should then have had such a translation as the following: "Being subject to your rulers, even honouring the bishops among you." That we take the *καὶ* as exegetic is not, then surprising, and numerous considerations plead for this rendering. Clement introduced a prophecy concerning bishops, and the only ecclesiastical officers he afterwards mentions are presbyters, which forces on us the conclusion that he, like the Scriptures, considered the bishop and presbyter as identical. He mentions those bishops whom the apostles appointed, and those presbyters who had finished their ministry and gone to their rest, whom we naturally conclude to be the same persons; and if the presbyters, who occur again and again, are not the same as the bishops, what have presbyters to do with the argument that is introduced by an assertion of the divine institution of bishops? Wotton, who would have the bishops to be intended by the word *ἡγουμένοι*, rulers, or guides, is not willing to take the consequence of his own argument, that there was a plurality of them at Corinth; but would palm upon us the gratuitous assumption so contrary to the whole letter, and to the records of those times, that Corinth was a metropolitan church, and that all the bishops of Achaia were intended. Even Cenchrea, a port of Corinth, had an independent church. Rom. xvi. 1.

‡ Chap. 47.

§ *ὑποτάγητε*, the word employed for subjection to rulers. Chap. 55.

|| Chap. 6.

or they were entirely overlooked; or they were presbyter-bishops, and there was a plurality in each church. The latter is the conclusion to which any unbiassed reader must come.

Irenæus introduces the succession of presbyters, just as Eusebius gives that of bishops; for the elder writer mentions only presbyters, when he says, "Heretics affirm that the truth cannot be learned from Scripture by those who know not tradition; but when again we challenge them to meet that tradition, which is from the apostles, and which is guarded in the churches by the succession of the presbyters, they oppose tradition, saying that they are wiser, not only than the presbyters, but even than the apostles."* Irenæus seems to know no intermediate grade between presbyters and apostles. Where were the bishops, then? "Wherefore, we ought to obey the presbyters, who are in the church, who have the succession from the apostles, as we have shown, who, with the succession of the episcopacy, have received a certain gift of truth according to the Father's good pleasure."† Here the presbyters are declared to have received the succession of the episcopacy, or oversight of the church. This was written, towards the end of the second century; and even then the apostolical succession, vesting in bishops, to the exclusion of presbyters, was unknown.

Clement the Alexandrian shows, that "in most things there are two offices, one superior, the other subordinate," in order to introduce the two offices in the Christian church: "It is equally so as to the church: the presbyters preserve the better form; the deacons, the subordinate. Both these ministrations angels perform to God, in the dispensation of terrene affairs."‡ Could Clement have known more than the two offices of presbyter and deacon in the church? Could he have supposed that

* *Advers. Hæres.* lib. iii. c. 2.

+ *Lib.* iv. c. 41, p. 381.

‡ *Strom.* vii. 504

bishops were above presbyters, or had any legitimate existence at all, but as presbyters? If he did, how could he speak of presbyters as in the better form? Must he not have assigned this to the bishops?

But where there were several of those whom Justin styles presidents in a church, much wisdom, and humility, and self-denial, would be required, to keep them in affectionate harmony; and when these Christian graces declined, superiority of rank or title would become an apple of discord. As the title of elder might be supposed to signify nothing more than such respectability as is acquired by age, it would not be an object of ambition; while that of bishop, or overseer, implied a superiority which an aspiring man would claim as exclusively his own. He would, then, leave the name of presbyter to those over whom he wished to exalt himself; and these might the more easily submit, sometimes because they felt an unfeigned deference for seniority or superior talents, and not unfrequently because they hoped that it would come to their turn to occupy alone the episcopal chair. Neither texts, nor facts, would be wanting to assist in operating the desired but fatal change; for those Scriptures which intimate there *might* be but one bishop in one church, would be pleaded; and the fact that many a church had, from whatever cause, no more than one, would inflame the desire of co-bishops, uneasy with their colleagues, to bear undivided rule. In many instances, the events of providence might leave but one presbyter in a church that formerly had more, and if he had sighed for superiority, he would be in no hurry to seek a second, who, when found, might, from deference to superior standing and experience, take the humbler title, and leave to his senior that of bishop.

That the name was an object of ambitious dispute, we know, from these remarkable words of Clement to the Corinthians: "Our apostles knew by the Lord Jesus

Christ that there will be strife for the name of the episcopate ;”* which intimates that at first there was a mere appropriation of the name to one.

Ignatius, therefore, who, if he has not been grossly belied by interpolators, was exactly the man to attach importance to a title, so harps upon it, to use his own figure, as to show that this was the note which charmed his ear. No one can read his Epistles without perceiving how truly Clement, if not Christ, had said, “There will be strife for the name ;” and that, if Ignatius did not lead the strife, it was at least the rage of his day, and that which on his temper took a powerful hold. To establish an exclusive monarchy in each church, and banish all idea of the lawfulness of more than one bishop, the most extravagant, not to say impious things are asserted concerning the parallel between one bishop and one Jesus Christ, or one God the Father. “Even Jesus Christ, our inseparable life, is sent by the will of the Father, as the bishops are by the will of Jesus Christ. I think you happy who are so joined to him (your bishop) as the church is to Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ to the Father ; that so all things may agree in the same unity.”† Such arguments, however, prove nothing but the want of better.

As Clement of Rome seems to know of no more than two offices in the church ; so he freely applies the terms bishop and presbyter to the same persons : “It will be no small sin in us to cast from the episcopate those who offered their gifts holily without blame. Blessed are those presbyters who, having finished their course, have had a fruitful and perfect departure ; for they do not fear lest any should remove them from the seat placed for them.”‡ Here several persons are spoken of, and though none but bishops and deacons are said to be appointed by the apostles, or foretold by the prophets, we have presbyters introduced because they are the same officers as the

* Chap. 44.

† Ig. ad Ephes. c. 3, 5.

‡ Chap. 44.

bishops. The tricks which Wake has employed to keep this out of sight are so disgraceful, that no one should suppose he has obtained the testimony of the apostolic fathers, because he has read this prelate's translation.

Polycarp, not carried away by the episcopal ambition, makes no mention even of the word bishop; but contents himself with the term, elder, or presbyter. "Let the elders be compassionate and merciful to all, converting those that have been led astray, (doing the work of bishops,) inspecting all the weak. So, therefore, let us serve (the Lord) with fear and all piety, as he himself commanded, and the apostles and prophets preached."* Here, as in the Scriptures, we might learn to apply the name bishop to the elders; for Polycarp uses only the last noun, though he employs the participle *ἐπισκεπτόμενοι*, as Peter that of *ἐπισκοποῦντες*, bishopising, when addressing presbyters.

Clement observes: "In the church, the presbyters preserve the form of that which improves (our characters), and the deacons of that which ministers (to our wants)."[†] But he introduces three, which he calls "promotions of the bishops, the presbyters, and the deacons;" though his argument leads us to suspect the bishops are foisted in. For he makes these "imitations of the angelical glory, and of that[‡] economy which the Scriptures say *they* wait for who, treading in the steps of the apostles, lived in the perfection of evangelical righteousness. For these, the apostle says, shall be taken up into the clouds; and first as deacons, attend, and then, according to the process, or next station of glory, be admitted into the presbytery; for glory differs from glory, till they increase to a perfect man." Some have observed that there are but two celestial orders to which Clement alludes—angels and archangels. But we have here, first, some waiting on Christ in judgment as deacons; then, others, admitted to the presbytery, attending to the twenty-four *elders* on thrones.

* Ad Phil. c. 6.

† Strom. vii.

‡ Ibid. vi. 481.

But if, among these presbyters, bishops are not included, they are shut out of heaven.

The double names of presbyter and bishop were, at length, employed to create two offices, appropriating the term bishop, or overseer, to a single person, as head, and reserving the word presbyter for any number of ministers who were not rulers; though every text of Scripture, in which the bishop is mentioned, shows, either a plurality, or the identity of this office with that of presbyter.* If the two names require two offices, why not make a third for the sake of the word pastor? a fourth for the *ἡγούμενος*, or ruler? a fifth for the teacher? and, in fact, as many ecclesiastical officers as we find names for? It must, however, be admitted, that the authors of the new device never pretended to scriptural authority; and that Jerome, uncontradicted, ascribed it solely to ecclesiastical arrangement.

From this change two evils followed. First, the bishop absorbs the ruling power, though the apostle commands Christians to obey as rulers none but those who spake to them the word of God;† and, secondly, the presbyter, pastor, or preacher, is placed under another minister, for which no scriptural authority is pretended, except by the absurd process of making bishops successors to the apostles.

The question may now be asked, what were those ecclesiastical officers who were neither bishops nor deacons? The elder Clement knew no such persons, and no account of the ordination of a mere presbyter occurs in the earliest age. This is the more remarkable, because the fathers, afterwards, make so much of the first appointments, and of the succession, in regular order; and because modern times have made presbyters the elements out of which bishops must be formed. The apostolic appointment of the non-episcopal presbyters, therefore,

* Acts xx. 28; Philip. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 2; Titus i. 7.

† Hebrews xiii. 7, 17.

was a prior question which ought to have been settled; for if lay materials cannot be immediately transformed into a bishop, but a layman must be made a presbyter, and then, from the presbyter the bishop be educes, the primitive ordination of the presbyter is a question of vital importance. A profound silence on this subject speaks volumes. Of the ordination of a presbyter that was not a bishop the Scriptures say nothing; for their presbyters are bishops, and their bishops presbyters; and Ignatius, while other apostolic fathers do not distinguish the presbyter from the bishop, says nothing of the ordination of a mere presbyter. No one pretends to trace up a non-episcopal presbyter to the apostles, fond as many are of ascribing prelates to that origin; and no ordination of a mere presbyter is to be found, till the apostles and apostolical fathers are too far removed from us to give to non-episcopal presbyters apostolicity. When the ecclesiastical arrangement of which Jerome speaks was effected, the persons who had been presbyter-bishops, and were not selected to be bishops, *κατ' ἐξοχήν*, or by emphasis, became, of course, mere presbyters, and persons were afterwards elected into their office, and ordained to it; but it was not deemed prudent or politic to say anything about the first ordination of a mere presbyter, lest the departure from apostolic precedent, being laid naked, should attract so much notice as to elicit censure. This is an affair of no importance to those churches in which ordination is always to the office of the presbyter-bishop, whom we find in Scripture and in the earliest fathers; but to those who ordain presbyters that are not bishops, it is a serious question. Let them produce, either from the Scriptures, or early fathers, apostolic authority for the ordination of a presbyter who was not made at the same time a bishop.

Analogous with this is the inquiry into the origin of the modern practice of making deacons the only elements from which presbyters are formed. This will not be pre-

tended to be of scriptural origin ; for we nowhere read of transforming a deacon into a presbyter, nor can it be supported from the apostolic fathers. Whether a deacon *may* be made a pastor is not the question ; but that all ministers of the word *must* now be made out of deacons, is as clear a departure from apostolical or patristic precedent as can well be conceived. The same man now passes through a threefold process, and is ordained deacon, presbyter, or, as men love to say, priest, and bishop ; though this last process is called consecration, while the Scriptures and the highest antiquity knew of but one ordination to the ministry, and speak of *bishops* as *ordained*, if this word should ever be used.

Another departure from all that the earliest fathers exhibit must now be exposed ; for when the first change had taken place, and instead of two orders only, bishops and deacons, a third was invented ; even then, that third, the presbyters, who were not bishops, were always present with the church or congregation and its bishop, forming one assembly, compared, by Ignatius, to a harp with its several strings. This was their idea of a church ; as remote from what is now called a church by those who glory in the fathers, as the living body is from the mangled, scattered fragments of Orpheus.

That the Epistle of Clement addresses one assembly, at Corinth, with all its officers constantly convened together, will scarcely be denied. He that had said, “ The apostles appointed bishops and deacons,” declared, “ It is a great shame that the church of the Corinthians should, through one or two persons, rise up against the presbyters.”* Let the flock of Christ be in peace “ with the elders that are set over it.” In his Epistle, Polycarp speaks in the name of the “ presbyters that are *with him*,” as well as in his own name, and refers to “ Valens, who was once a presbyter among the Philippians.”†

* Ad Cor. c. 47.

† Ad Phil. c. 11.

Ignatius exhorts the Ephesians to be subject to the bishop and presbytery, evidently considering them as living together, and worshipping in one congregation.* “Do nothing without your bishop and presbyters, being come together to the same place,”† as to one temple and one altar. To the Trallians: “Let all reverence the deacons as the commandment of Jesus Christ, and the bishop as Jesus Christ, the presbyters as the sanhedrim of God: without these a church is not called.”‡ Here we not only find the presbyters with the bishop and deacons, but are told there is no church without them. But it is not necessary to say more to prove that, when the order of presbyters was created distinct from the bishop, they were still considered as ministering with him in the same congregation; and that there was no church without its bishop, presbyters, and deacons. “One altar, as there is one bishop, together with his presbytery and the deacons.§ I salute your worthy bishop, and venerable presbytery, and my fellow-servants, the deacons, and every man.”|| The presbyters of a church that were not ministering in it, along with the bishop, the apostolic fathers never saw; nor a church that was not a congregation, and that had not a bishop exclusively its own, in fact, its resident pastor, constantly ministering to them.

“My soul for the souls of those that obey the bishop, the presbyters, the deacons. Labour, contend together, run together, suffer together, sleep together, wake together. Let none of you be found a deserter.”¶ The presbyters, always supposed to be found with the bishop in the same congregation, Ignatius regarded as a halo of glory round the bishop’s head.

Of the causes and consequences of the changes that were going on in the second century, the authors were either not aware, or were afraid to speak. The loose and

* Chap. ii. + Ad Magnes. c. 7.

|| Ad Smyrn. c. 12.

† c. 3. § Ad Philad. c. 4.

¶ Ad Polyc. c. 6.

inconsequent manner in which they appeal to Scripture never strikes us with more force, than when we hear them with the same breath pleading apostolic authority, as far as it suited them, and arguing for change, as if they were themselves apostles. It does not appear that they ever adverted to Scripture, which makes bishops and presbyters identical, when they were creating a third order by the distinction between the two ; nor that they deigned to cast a single glance on the texts which show a plurality of bishops in one church, while they were enacting the episcopal monarchy as the universal law. They expect us to bow to all the texts they quote, and to forget all that they omit. Such was the apostolicity of the incipient apostasy.

The consequences of any change are not to be known, till, in the long concatenation of causes and effects, time becomes the great discoverer of truth. That there must be but one bishop to one church produced, while, in the earliest ages, a church continued to be but one congregation, no other effect than the imperfect supervision of the larger ones, or their destitution, when the pastor was driven away by persecution ; but when, towards the middle of the fourth century, that was called a church, or congregation, which was so extensive, that it never did, and never could, congregate, the single bishop was transmuted, from the pastor of one flock of Christ's sheep, into a diocesan over many flocks, who fed other shepherds instead of the sheep.

Of the two changes that occurred, in the bishop, and in the church, either, being alone, might have become comparatively harmless. For one bishop might have taken care of one flock, and could not have become, to a great extent, a lord over God's heritage, or clergy ; and a church multiplied into many congregations would have been little more than a change of names, if there had been as many

bishops as congregations. But the two changes together, operated like the chemical union of two innocuous gases, to produce a third substance, which is a deadly poison. One bishop over many congregations—a thing as much unknown to the fathers of three centuries as to the inspired Scriptures—became a lord bishop, an archbishop, a patriarch, a pope.

The first step of the devious course, was the adoption of the monarchical principle, that there must be but one bishop in a church, where the Scriptures clearly show there may be more; the next, was the rendering of this monarch an autocrat, instead of the constitutional executive, like a British king; the third was, creating, by the extension of the bishop's rule beyond the bounds of a single congregation, entirely a new kind of church; the fourth, set over these diocesan bishops, archbishops; the fifth, placed over archbishops, patriarchs; and the last, exalted a pope over them all. If once we depart from the congregational bishop we cannot escape the pope; for the boundaries of a diocese or a nation, and the power of the state, are nonentities in a community swayed by the apostolic writings, which know neither a diocesan church, nor a national, nor the interference of a civil ruler in the kingdom of Christ.

Having shown, from those who are usually called the fathers, the original identity of bishop and presbyter, and the surreptitious introduction of a distinction, by appropriating the former title to one as superior, and leaving the latter to belong to many inferior ministers; we now request particular attention to, at least, one father of the highest order, the Syriac translator. In the third chapter of Paul's First Epistle to Timothy, the two orders of bishop and deacon are introduced; but where our translation has properly rendered the Greek, "If a man desire the episcopate, or office of the bishop, he desires a good

cluded they were, in the mind of the apostle, when he said, "Ordain elders, if any be blameless; for a bishop must be blameless."*

On the choice of the pastor, presbyter, or bishop, let us now hear what the earliest writers say. The Epistle from the Romans, written by Clement, intimates that a few men disturbed the peace of the church at Corinth, on the question, it seems, of the appointment or deposition of the presbyters; nor does he deny the people's right to give their suffrage, but blames only the spirit which they had displayed. He says, "Let us oppose senseless men lifted up by pride of their own speech, or reason, rather than offend God.† Let us reverence our rulers; let us honour our presbyters." The apostles "appointed their first fruits to be bishops and deacons."‡ Knowing by the Lord there will be strife for the name of the episcopate or oversight, they established the forementioned, and afterwards gave a (rule of) succession,§ that when they should die, other approved men should succeed to their ministry. We think these are not justly expelled from their ministry who were appointed by them (the apostles) or by other esteemed

bishops, who, indeed, should always be called apostles, if they are real successors to the office. But all this is equally remote from the authority of the Scripture, and from that of the earliest fathers. Clement, the most ancient, who enters most fully into the original appointment, not only gives no hint of bishops succeeding to the apostles, but conveys the opposite idea: "God the Father sent Christ," not to be another God the Father: "Christ sent the apostles," not to be another Christ: "The apostles appointed bishops," not to be apostles; but each successive appointment was inferior to the preceding: and by the same rule by which we make bishops successors to the apostles, we must make the apostles successors to Christ, and Christ successor to the Father; and thus at last bishops successors to the Father. This arrogance ends in blasphemy.

* This may contribute to prove the early date of the Peshito; for it is certain that the distinction between bishop and presbyter began to be introduced in the second century, and became very prevalent as the third advanced, so that the renderings that we have noticed would not have been welcomed, or even suffered to be introduced, at a later period.

+ Clem. ad Cor. c. 21.

† c. 42.

§ ἐπινομή.

men after them, the whole church consenting, and they having ministered unblameably to the flock of Christ, and for a long time well attested by all.

Of all that is here ascribed to the twelve, we must judge by Scripture. We know the apostles did not appoint deacons, in the sense of selecting the persons, but said to the multitude, "Choose ye out men whom we may appoint." This, perhaps, is all that Clement intended; but if he makes the apostles choose the persons, we know he was wrong.

The whole congregation chose deacons, who, in the communions that make them the original elements out of which all other officers are taken, are never chosen by the people. But with the deacons the bishops are here joined, as appointed in the same way. Clement, therefore, either meant that the apostles appointed those whom the congregation *chose*, or he contradicted the inspired book of the Acts. The *order* they gave for the succession, after the death of the first, was either an unsupported assertion, or was supposed to be implied in the apostles' recorded conduct, which it is imperative on us to imitate. If we adopt the latter supposition as most honourable to Clement, we know that what is translated ordain* signifies election by show of hands, which, however denied, cannot be disproved. "The whole church consented,"† says Clement, who affirms that the apostles gave an order for the appointment; and therefore he argues that it was not lawful to put away, without cause, presbyter-bishops so appointed. When no such consent is given, or even asked, the apostolic order is not followed, and there is no apostolic succession, or ordination, or bishop; the whole affair, being non-apostolical, is *ipso facto* null and void, if we are to follow to the letter this most ancient and eminent

* χειροτονέω.

† Wotton very amusingly translates, "The whole church consenting;" but comments as if they merely congratulated the bishops ordained. p. 229.

father, who has been pronounced *facile princeps*, chief of them all.

But the very theme of Clement's letter proves that the members of the Church at Corinth gave their voice in the appointment; for he wrote to them because they had displaced their elders, or bishops; and though this is charged upon ^{one} ~~two~~ turbulent men, it is never affirmed that they had no choice in the affair; but the sin is made to consist in removing presbyter-bishops, who were duly appointed, and had lived so unblameably as to give no just cause for their removal. If these presbyters had sinned, the church would not, then, have done wrong in "removing them from their seat," to use Clement's own argument and phrase. He hints, indeed, at office for life, when he says, "The apostles pointed out the succession or heirship, that if the first officers died, other approved men might take up their ministry;" but he evidently admits that they might be displaced for evil conduct. He says to the church or assembly, "See how *you* have put out from the ministry those who conducted themselves well." That the church had a voice in the appointment, and the power of removal for sufficient causes, is implied. Again; that the members of the church not only came voluntarily into it, and gave their consent to the appointment of its officers, but had also a right to withdraw, when an appointment was made which they could not approve, we learn from the same Epistle. "Who, then, among you is generous, compassionate, full of charity? Let him say, If there be disturbance, and strife, and schisms, on my account, I will withdraw. I go away wherever you choose, and I will do whatever is commanded by the majority or multitude."* How different is this language from that of Clement's pretended successors at Rome! They never supposed a man could be generous, or compassionate, or full of charity, and yet withdraw from the

* Chap. 54.

church because he did not approve of the bishop. Far from giving him such counsel, they smote him with the thunders of excommunication. Clement says, "He that shall withdraw, for the sake of peace, will get honour from the Lord, and every place will receive him;" but they who boast of their apostolic succession would follow such an one to the ends of the earth with execrations. To withdraw is, in Clement's esteem, to prevent schisms; but we are now told that this is schism itself. In apostolic times, schism was discord and alienation among those who remained in the same congregation; in our times, it is said to be *continuing* in a communion of love and harmony with those who are "partakers of like precious faith." Clement praises the man who does whatever is commanded by the majority or multitude; but these are now told that they have no right to command.

That the church was accustomed to choose, or elect, persons, and that what is called in our translation, ordaining, was electing, we learn from a passage in the letter of Ignatius, who had sufficiently high notions of episcopal rights. He says to Polycarp, "Since the church at Antioch is in peace, through your prayers, it is proper to convene a council, worthy of God, and to elect* some one who may be called God's messenger, and go into Syria." Here Polycarp, the bishop, is not advised to do this of his own authority; but a council is to be called, and a person is to be elected. The word which Wake himself translates choose, or elect, is that which is usually rendered ordain; so that the choice or election of bishops, or elders, is confessedly expressed when Scripture employs that word. Where it happens to refer to a messenger sent from one church to another, the word is permitted to signify a choice or election; but had it been applied to an ecclesiastical officer, especially a bishop, would not an episcopal translator have rendered it "ordain?" But shall we say

* χειροτονῆσαι, c. 7.

that the church is advised to ordain? "It becomes you, O Polycarp, to convene a council, to choose(?) or ordain(?) some one whom you love, to go into Syria to glorify your love." If we translate ordain, then the church had the power of ordination; if we say elect, then the word rendered ordain in the New Testament is confessed to mean election,* not ordination, as our translators say. We may make our election, but we must abide by it, and cannot at once choose and refuse the same thing. If we will adhere to our translation and render the word employed by Clement ordain, then we grant to the church in council power to ordain; but, if we translate, with Wake, "choose," then we admit that a choice or election of elders, as well as deacons, by the church is taught in Scripture, when it uses this word *χειροτονέω*. Where there was nothing to awaken his episcopal prejudices, Wake translated as a native Greek would have understood Ignatius to mean, "elect," and has left a memorial of his own unbiassed opinion. That this, like all other words, is sometimes used improperly, where no election could be intended, is, by the version of Wake himself, admitted to be insufficient to destroy its proper signification; and even when it signifies simply to appoint, this no more means the religious service now called ordination than the appointment of a bishop by the prime minister denotes ordination. Yet upon this perversion of terms and confusion of ideas, some attempt to build the continuance of the church and the salvation of men.

Cyprian shows, that so late as his days, when the bishops had greatly abridged the liberty of the churches, these had not entirely lost their rights. "According to the divine tradition, and the apostolical observance, we must diligently guard and hold this order, which is observed among us, and among almost all the provinces, that to perform the ordinations legitimately. the neighbouring bishops of the province assemble with the people for whom the pre-

* Chap. 10.

late is to be ordained, and that the bishop be elected in the presence of the people, who know the life and the conversation of every one."

The ordination of Sabinus was made with the suffrages of all the brethren, and by the judgment of the bishops.* What would Cyprian say of the legitimacy of the present bishop of Rome, and of others who claim the exclusive title? At Rome, the people are carefully excluded from the conclave, and in other countries the brethren are no more assembled to choose a bishop than to choose a king. Cyprian, however, thus addresses the brethren, in distinction from the ministers: "Let them patiently hear our counsel; let them wait our return; and when I shall, by the mercy of God, have come to you, we, the several co-bishops, may be able to examine, according to the doctrine of the Lord, and the presence of the confessors, and the letters and wishes of the blessed martyrs; and *according to your sentence.*"† Cyprian declared that, from the first, he, being elected by the suffrages of the people, determined to do nothing without them. In defiance of the ancient ecclesiastical maxim, the voice of the people is no longer considered the voice of God, but that of the civil ruler now creates bishops.

As the alterations in Cyprian's works, of which complaints are made, were all in favour of the hierarchy, far from suspecting interpolations in behalf of popular rights, we only wonder that such passages as we find were suffered to remain. But Clement of Alexandria shows that some attention was paid to the call of God, made known by the qualifications of the person elected. "It is lawful, therefore, that those who are exercised in the Lord's commands, living perfectly and intelligently according to the gospel,

* Ep. 67.

† Ep. 17. Daille, *de usu et abusu patrum*, p. 54, contends that the words "*secundum vestram quoque sententiam*," have been omitted. They certainly are not in the edition of 1690.

should be inscribed into the selection of the apostles. This man is truly a presbyter of the church, and a true deacon of the will of God, if he do and teach the things of the Lord, not being elected by men, nor, because a presbyter, reckoned just; but, because just, enrolled in the presbytery.* Here presbyters and deacons, not bishops, are inscribed in the selection of the apostles. But the true presbyter and deacon does and teaches the things of the Lord. When it is said, not elected by men, we must add the word *only*; for upon any hypothesis some men must choose them; but they are reckoned presbyters because they are just, which shows that God also, and not men only, chose them. The moderns assure us that a man is a true minister by succession, though he be not just; but the apostolic succession, according to Clement, consists in being of the apostolic school of doctrine, as some were called Annicerians, from the Cyrenaic succession or doctrine.†

The right of election was taken from the people, in consequence of the wars and bloodshed to which it gave rise. Stillingfleet‡ largely displays the tumults and murders that arose from popular elections of bishops, Rome being for several days a scene of blood, on the election of Damasus; and we can easily concede that *such* Christians should not be entrusted with the choice of *such* bishops. But while the *change* for which that writer contends shows what was the primitive practice, the character of Christians when they could murder each other, deprives their conduct in ecclesiastical affairs of all claim on our imitation.

PART III.—Of Priests and Clergy.

THOUGH the appellation of priests was too soon given to the ministers of Christ, later ages have attempted, by falsifying the testimonies of the highest antiquity, to antedate

* Strom. vi. 480.

† 305.

‡ Irenicum.

that corruption. The New Testament never terms its ministers priests ; but either appropriates the word to the sons of Aaron as the types, and to Christ as the antitype, or applies it spiritually to the whole body of the faithful. The literal priesthood of mere men is declared to be abolished by Christ, and all real sacrifice superseded by "his one offering of himself once for all." No other than Christ's priesthood succeeds to that of Aaron and his sons ; and the Christian church consists of those who are "made priests to God." The temple is pronounced a type, not of the church, but of Christ. The ancient priesthood came by birth, and ran in the blood of Aaron ; but the church is like the synagogue, whose elders, not hereditary, were taken from any tribe ; so that the Jews have synagogues, though they pretend to no priesthood, because they know not the descendants of Aaron. Christian ministers are not born, but made such ; and if the word priest is ever applied to any persons besides Christ, it is to the whole Christian community, who are thus addressed : "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God, through Jesus Christ." The fathers observe, that all Christians give thanks "to him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests to God." It is only as they are Christians that the ministers of Christ may call themselves priests ; so that every believer is equally a priest. Of this, the early writers were fully aware, while using language that opened the door to the contrary opinion. A human priesthood is, by Romanists and semi-papists, made the essence of the Christian ministry ; and the salvation of men is impiously suspended on that for which neither a text of Scripture, nor a sentence from the earliest fathers, can be adduced. Could any rational man suppose, that what is essential to our salvation would be left without inspired authority, to conflict with numerous unanswerable opposing argu-

ments? The Epistle to the Hebrews, whence we derive our acquaintance with the evangelical import of the shadowy system, confines its application to the person and work of Christ, making him our only priest and real sacrifice. If we hearken to God rather than to man, we must consider all proper priesthood and sacrifice absorbed by Christ, and nothing left but the spiritual sacrifices of prayer, and praise, and good works, which every believer is a priest to offer acceptably to God, through Christ, the one High Priest of our profession.

What is called typical theology has ever been the favourite study of imaginative minds, enabling them to discover whatever suited their taste or their creed; but the legitimate use of the types is to be learned only from the word of Him that instituted those modes of instruction; and where has he so fully unfolded the typical import of the Jewish ritual and priesthood as in the Epistle to the Hebrews? To violate the principles of this book, and prefer the indulgence of our own fancy, is to forfeit all claim to respect, as expositors and theologians.

That the earliest fathers knew no priesthood distinct from the body of the faithful is proved by a fact most disgraceful to the Christian name; for their signature to the false doctrine has been forged under the name of a translation. As the New Testament, like the Septuagint, uses *ιερεὺς* for priest, and *πρεσβύτερος* for elder; so Clement of Rome, when mentioning the priests of the Jewish church, employs the proper word; and when referring to the ministers of Christ, calls them elders, *πρεσβυτέρους*. But Wake renders this last, *priest*, usually putting elder, or presbyter, in a note; first, pre-occupying the minds of his readers with the idea of a priest by a false translation, and then palming on them the deceptive notion, that the original may be translated either way; though aware, as the learned man must have been, that this is not true, and that Clement accurately distinguished the terms. The

word *priest* is even suffered sometimes to stand without any note of correction; as in the Epistle of Ignatius to the Philadelphians,* where Wake gives, “bishops, priests, and deacons;” and the original says, “bishops, presbyters, and deacons.” From this conduct we may judge what authority the apostolical fathers afford for making Christian ministers priests; for it is poverty that makes men commit forgery. This, however, is in perfect keeping with the whole affair, as it was by stealth that an order of priests was introduced into the Christian church.

Clement mentions priests, indeed, but it is when he is speaking of the Jews; and the use of the word in its proper place combines with the total absence of it, when Christian ministers are mentioned, to prove that he did not consider them priests. The language of a later age, when the ministers of Christ were constantly called priests, is in striking contrast with that of Clement.

Nor can even the bombastic Ignatius, fond as he is of extravagant figures, be adduced as a witness to a Christian priesthood, correspondent with that of the Jews. If he speaks of being “within the altar,” he places deacons, nay, all the faithful, there; and this is considered no proof that they are priests.

Justin Martyr accords with the New Testament, in representing, not ministers exclusively, but all Christians as God’s priests, and even high priests:† “We, who, by the name of Jesus, shall be all as one man to God, the Creator of all, are the true race, high priests of God, as God himself testifies, saying, that in every place among the Gentiles, they are offering to him sacrifices acceptable and pure. God accepts sacrifices from no one except through his priests. Through this name all the sacrifices, therefore, which Jesus Christ delivered to be made—that is, in the Eucharist of the bread and the cup, which in every place on earth is performed by Christians—God by

* Chap. 10.

† Dial. pars secunda, 344.

anticipation testifies to be acceptable to him." Prayers are said to be sacrifices; but these are offered by all Christians. It should not pass unnoticed, that Justin, who says, "*We* Christians are the race of high priests," is thought to have been what would be called a layman, and not a minister.

Clement of Alexandria allegorizes thus:—"Nothing is better than to hear the word itself, giving greater intelligence by Scripture, which says, 'And he shall put off the linen stole which he put on when he went into the sanctuary, and he shall lay it aside there, and wash his body in the holy place, and put on his stole. But in one manner I think the Lord puts off and puts on, descending to sense, and in another he, who by him believes and puts on and puts off the holy stole, as the apostle intimates.'"^{*} Here Christ and the believer are made the antitypes to the priest. Could Clement have supposed that Christian ministers succeeded to Jewish priests?

Tertullian thus addresses Christians in general: "We shall be fools, if we think that what is not lawful to priests is lawful to laics. Are not also we laics priests? It is written, 'He has made us a kingdom, and priests to God and his Father.' The authority of the church constituted the difference between order (those in orders) and the people; and by the session of the order, *i. e.*, those in orders sitting together, honour is sanctified by God. Where there is no session of the ecclesiastical order, thou both offerest and tingest, *i. e.*, both administereest the Supper and baptizest; thou alone art a priest to thyself. But where there are three, there is a church, although laymen; for everyone lives by his own faith; nor is there any respect of persons with God.—Therefore, if thou hast the right of the priest in thyself, where it is necessary, it becomes thee to have also the discipline of the priest, where it is necessary to have the sacerdotal right. Dost

^{*} Strom. v. 413.

thou, digamist, a man twice married, tinge, *i. e.*, baptize? Dost thou, digamist, offer, *i. e.*, administer, the Supper? How much more will it be a capital offence for a laic digamist to act for a priest; when even from the digamist priest himself is taken away the sacerdotal act. But you say an allowance is made for necessity. No necessity is excused which might be avoided. Do not, then, be found a digamist, and you do not fall into the necessity of administering what is not lawful to a digamist. For it is the will of God that we should be all so circumstanced that we may be everywhere fit to administer his sacraments. One God, one faith, and one discipline.”*

As Jerome affirms that the distinction between presbyter and bishop was a mere ecclesiastical arrangement, and not a divine institution; so Tertullian here declares, that the authority of the church created the distinction between priests and people. But both these distinguished men show that they did not believe it was in the power of the church to alter the nature of things. Tertullian contends that the people's right remained indefeasible, because it is written that Christ made his whole church a kingdom and priests; or, as we read the passage, “kings and priests.” However God may have sanctified order in the church, a

* Vani erimus, si putaverimus, quod sacerdotibus non liceat, laicis licere. Nonne et laici sacerdotes sumus? scriptum est, *regnum quoque nos et sacerdotes, Deo et Patri suo fecit.* Differentiam inter ordinem et plebem constituit ecclesiæ auctoritas, et honor per ordinis consessum sanctificatus a Deo, ibi ecclesiastici ordinis non est consessus? Et offers et tinguis, sacerdos es tibi solus. Sed ubi tres, ecclesia est, licet laici, unusquisque enim de *sua fide* vivit, nec est *personarum acceptio apud Deum.* . . . Igitur si habes jus sacerdotis in temetipso ubi necesse est: habeas oportet etiam disciplinam sacerdotis, ubi necesse sit habere jus sacerdotis. Digamus tinguis? digamus offers? quanto magis laico digamo capitale erit agere pro sacerdote, cum ipsi sacerdoti digamo auferatur agere sacerdotem. Sed necessitati, inquis, indulgetur. Nulla necessitas excusatur, quæ potest non esse. Noli denique digamus deprehendi et non committis in necessitatem administrandi quod non licet digamo. Omnes nos Deus ita vult dispositos esse, ut ubique sacramentis ejus obeundis apti simus. Unus Deus, una fides, una et disciplina. —De Exhortatione Castitatis, c. vii. p. 91, 92.

mere layman might, if occasion required, administer the Supper and baptize, and be a priest virtually; for where there are three, there is a church, though they are all laymen; because Christ has declared, that "Wherever two or three are gathered together in his name, he is in the midst of them." For every one lives by his own faith, and with God is no respect of persons; so far is he from suspending our salvation on a certain order of persons, called priests. As, therefore, it was deemed unlawful for one who had been twice married to administer the Supper or baptize, laymen should not marry again; because it was the will of God that they should be always fit to administer his sacraments. As we have all one God and one faith, we have one discipline for priests and laymen.

But the word priest, once introduced, soon acquired an authority contrary to Scripture and to the views of the earliest fathers. As the world is ruled by names, a figure, taken for a fact, was made an argument; and the word, which should have been the child, became the father of the thing. Few asked counsel at the oracle of God; and those who repeated its response coolly persisted in giving to the ministers the title of priests, even while confessing that it was conferred by Christ on all the faithful.

On baptism, Septimius thus speaks: "The high priest, who is the bishop, has the right of giving (it). Thence presbyters and deacons; not, however, without the authority of the bishop, on account of the honour of the church, which being preserved, peace is preserved. Otherwise the laity also has the right. For what is equally received can be equally given."

Those who wish to escape the manifest consequences of these statements have no other resource than to say, "They are the private opinions of Tertullian, who became a Montanist," which they drop from their memory again, when he says what seems to support their views. But the African father here manifestly appeals to acknowledged

principles, and admitted practices, as well as to the Scriptures; and asks for no deference to his private opinion. His whole argument is an appeal to the response in the breasts of those to whom he writes. While many of Tertullian's words are now taken in the most stringent way, *these* which we quote prove that the church had not yet lost its conviction that every believer was a priest.

It was at last supposed that Christian pastors were true priests, who alone could administer the sacraments. Many things contributed to this fatal change. The Hebrew converts had been so familiar with the word priest, and so wedded to the idea, as Paul's letter to them proves, that they easily fell into the new fashion; and the Gentiles were so accustomed to think there must be a visible priest as well as God, that they were not slow to follow, and thus all parties went astray from the Scriptures. The new priests, too, were nothing loath; for the Jews had seen their Maccabean high priests reign as princes, and shed their lustre over all the house of Aaron; while the converts from heathenism knew that the emperor gloried in the title of Pontifex Maximus. Both sections of the church were therefore willing to think, that, if they conceded to Christ the honour of being the great High Priest, there was no heresy in a human priesthood.*

The portentous and impious assumption of the priestly name became at last the boast of ministers, who thus gloried in their shame. They had not modesty enough to leave to Christ the title of High Priest, which we have

* For when in the primitive church the name of priests came to be attributed to gospel ministers, from a fair compliance (as was thought then) of the Christians only to the name used both among Jews and Gentiles; in process of time, corruption increasing in the church, those names that were used by the Christians by way of analogy and accommodation brought in the things themselves primarily intended by those names, so by the metaphorical names of priests and altars at last came up the sacrifice of the mass, without which they thought the names of priest and altar were insignificant.—Stillingfleet's Irenicum, 2nd edit. 265.

heard Tertullian apply to the bishop. To support their own priesthood, men were compelled to do violence to that of Christ, and to blaspheme the very sacrifice of the cross in which they profess to glory. For it was easily seen that a priest must have a sacrifice to offer, and if something more than the priesthood of the whole body of the faithful, who offer up prayers, and thanks, and benevolences, with which "sacrifices God is well pleased," was to be ascribed to Christian ministers, there was no other real sacrifice but that of Christ. On this, therefore, they laid their sacrilegious hands, and in the teeth of the Scripture which declares that Christ alone offered it up once for all, they pretended to sacrifice him again. Rome therefore makes of the Lord's Supper the sacrifice of the mass offered up for the sins of the living and the dead; and all pretended Protestants who plead for a human proper priesthood must virtually join in this conspiracy against the glory of Christ. A commemorative sacrifice is nonsense; for if it is a real sacrifice, it is not the commemoration of one; if it is but a commemoration, it is not itself a sacrifice; if it needs to be offered again, Christ did not make an end of offering for sin, and is not, then, the Messiah foretold by Daniel.

Of the term clergy it may not seem worth while to speak, as some may say, it is but a word on which no important consequences can hang. But it has been a theme of contention; and therefore we must observe that it is not only without scriptural authority, but is in direct opposition to the mind of the only apostle who has mentioned the word *κλήρος*, from which that of clergy is derived. For Peter, whom the Romanists love to put at the head of the clerical order, charges the ministers, presbyters, to act "not as lords over God's clergy, but to be ensamples to the flock." The people, then, are Peter's clergy; but Clement, whom he is said to have ordained, has been supposed to imply the term clergy, because he calls the people the laity. He,

however, then spoke of the Jewish people under the name of the *λαός*, in distinction from the priests and Levites. This will at once be seen to afford no sanction to Christian clergy; for if we must have all that the Jews had, where are our Levites and Nethinim? Clement had learned from the Septuagint to consider Israel as both clergy and laity.*

To the age of Tertullian this innovation and direct contradiction to the Scriptures is assigned; and as it is certain that it then began to prevail, so, in the days of Cyprian, it became the established practice of the church to call ministers priests and the clergy. The fathers, however, never pretended to plead divine right, as conveyed by the vocal instruction of the apostles, or by the inspired Scriptures; but expressly declare that the honours of a priesthood were committed to the clergy by the authority of the church. Who gave the church that authority they say not, but attempt to justify the assumption, by the necessity of preserving order and peace, so that when these were not violated and necessity required, the people might resume their indefeasible rights and be priests to themselves.†

This, however, was, in following ages, denied; for the beginning of pride, as well as of strife, “is like the letting out of water;” and we are charged to “leave it off before it be meddled with.” They who go as far back as

* οἱ τοι λαός σου καὶ κληρός σου. Deut. ix. 29.

† A more gross failure it would be difficult to conceive than that of Wotton, in his preliminary dissertation to Clement, intended to prove the right of a Christian priesthood and clergy. He neither pretends to show that the Scriptures have applied these terms to the ministers of the gospel, nor to supply this fatal deficiency by an appeal to the early fathers; but assumes that as Christ was a high priest, he made the apostles priests, and they made bishops priests, and bishops made presbyters priests. Why did he not say that, as Christ was God, he made a succession of gods? Christ was a high priest, as he offered up himself a sacrifice for our sins, and ever lives to make intercession for us; and as these honours belong to him alone, so does a proper priesthood.

they can, to find authority for calling ministers priests and clergy, pay no attention to the principle on which the practice was introduced, but contradict the earliest witnesses, by pretending to scriptural warrant, which the fathers, whom they make authoritative expositors, could not find. It is now pronounced unlawful for laymen to do what the fathers say they might, if necessity occurred, administer the sacraments.

The progress of error and corruption is still further displayed in the church, which first imitated the Jewish priesthood, and then departed from it, by adding the mimicry of worldly domination. Beside the ordinary priesthood of all Aaron's sons, there was, in the Jewish church, no dignity except that of high priest, which Tertullian ascribes to the bishop of a single congregation. This, however, could not long suffice, for they who at first pleaded for the model of the temple, soon left it far behind, by a list of dignities, archdeacons, deans, archbishops, primates, patriarchs, cardinals, and popes, for which not a single example could be found, either in synagogue or temple. But this was no discouragement; for, after having gone through the constellation Cancer, so far as to become semi-Jews, they rushed all the way to the beggarly elements of the world; and though our Lord had exhibited the domination of earthly kingdoms as a beacon, saying, "It shall not be so with you," they took it as a pattern, saying, "It ought to be so with us;" and as there are gradations of empire, through petty officers, governors, dukes, princes, up to emperors, we must have spiritual authorities, subordinate and superior, till we reach to popes, by whom kings shall reign and princes decree justice.*

* Dodwell attempts to justify the appropriation of the terms priests and clergy to ministers, by arguing that, though Israel was said to be a nation of priests, and God's *κλήρος*, clergy, or lot, or heritage; yet God made the family of Aaron priests by emphasis, and therefore the application of this term to Christians in general cannot prove that ministers are not specially priests.

PART IV.—*The Worship of the Church.*

THE worship of a church is invariably represented by the earliest fathers as celebrated in one place, on which they lay the utmost stress, treating every tendency to separating into various assemblies as schismatic. What would they have thought, then, of a national church divided into numerous assemblies, if such an idea could have entered the heads of those who always spoke of the churches, not the church, of a nation?

The day of their meeting they called the Lord's day, as the language of the Apostle John proves that even previously to the date of the Apocalypse, the day of Christ's resurrection was known by that name, which proclaimed it sacred to the Lord.

Justin declares, "On the day of the sun, we all make a common assembly; since it is the first day in which God made the world." Here breaks out the ingenuity of the philosopher, who must find new and mystical reasons for observing the first day of the week, disdaining to be satisfied with the plain scriptural fact, that, from the day of Christ's resurrection, the disciples derived the practice which distinguished them from the Jews. He *adds*, however, "Jesus Christ our Saviour rose, on that day, from the dead." "For the day before that of Saturn, they crucified him, and on that after Saturday, which is Sunday, he, appearing to his apostles, taught these things to his disciples which we have delivered for your inspec-

But we are not obliged to prove a negative. Dodwell's argument admits that the priesthood of the sons of Aaron was created by the appointment of God. Let the same authority be shown for Christian priests, and every disciple of Christ must submit. The New Testament confessedly fails to furnish this authority, which is enough to satisfy every Protestant that no one Christian is more a priest than another; but papistical writers flee to the fathers, as knowing most of the mind of the apostles; and all who can be supposed to possess any such advantage prove that the apostles never made Christian ministers priests, or called them clergy.

tion.”* Clement of Alexandria affirms that Plato prophesied of the Lord’s day, in the tenth book of the Republic.†

The Christian worship Justin describes thus: “On the day called Sunday, there is made a gathering into the same place of all that live in city or country, and the memoranda of the apostles, or the writings of the prophets, are read as long as may be. Afterwards, the reader having ceased, the president makes verbally the admonition and exhortation to the imitation of these excellent things. Then we all rise and pour forth prayers. Then the bread and wine are taken.”‡

As Justin shows that the Christian churches had no liturgy, so neither Irenæus, nor Clement of Alexandria, nor Origen, knew any such thing. Tertullian, also, says, “We look up to heaven with our hands stretched forth;”§ which precludes the idea of either holding or looking at a prayer-book; “and we make prayers *sine monitore*, as from the free motion of our own hearts.” He that reads prayers out of a book cannot be said to pray, *sine monitore*, without a monitor. Would any one who employs a liturgy describe his worship in the terms of Tertullian?

The order of worship was as follows: first, the reading of the Scriptures of the New Testament, that is, the memoranda of the apostles or the gospels;|| then the reading of the prophets from the Old Testament. “After this, the president delivers an exhortation, or sermon, urging all to imitate what they had learned.” Origen informs us that the lessons were expounded for an hour. Then psalms, or hymns, were sung,¶ as Pliny informs Trajan, that the Christians “sung a hymn to Christ as God.” The later Clement affirms that they were always praising, hymning, blessing, psalmodising;** every one

* First Apology.

† Strom. v.

‡ Apol. i. 98.

§ Apologeticus, c. 30.

|| Just. Apol. i. 98.

¶ Tertullian de Anima.

** Strom. vi.

being invited to sing out of the holy Scriptures, or from his own genius;* and of the Psalms they most frequently sung the 133rd, "Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."† Clement is thought to have left on record some of his own hymns, one of which put into English verse will be found in the Appendix.‡ The human voice, however, he pronounces the only Christian instrument of music, saying, "Praise him on the psaltery; for the tongue is the Lord's psaltery. Praise him on the harp; the mouth is to be understood. The cymbal means the mouth, which echoes by the force of the lips."§

Justin informs us that the president preached or expounded, and, doubtless, this was the usual practice; yet Ignatius, the great advocate, perhaps author, of the Monarchy of Episcopacy, tells the church to respect the bishop the more, in proportion as they found him silent. How venerable, then, would have been a dumb bishop! But we cannot help suspecting that an interpolator, who was himself one of Isaiah's "dumb dogs," inserted this stupid exhortation. If, however, it is a genuine Ignatian sentence, then others must have spoken for him that was silent; and we learn from Origen's history that what are called laymen anciently preached. For when he was not in holy orders, he was invited to preach in the church, by Alexander, bishop in Jerusalem, and Theoctistus of Cæsarea. Demetrius, to whose charge at Alexandria Origen belonged, asserted, "that never before had laymen preached in the presence of bishops." But the other pastors tell him: "You speak what is not true; for wherever any are found fit to profit the brethren, they are exhorted by the holy bishops to preach to the people." After adducing instances, they add, "It is probable this is done in other places, though we know it not."||

* Pæd. ii. c. 4.

+ Tertullian, Adv. Psyc. c. 13.

‡ Appendix, K.

§ Pædag. lib. ii. c. 4.

|| Euseb. lib. vi. c. 19.

Now, it is to be observed, that even Demetrius ventures not to say that laymen never preached, but only that they did it not in the presence of bishops, which might have been true, with the fullest liberty for lay-preaching where no bishop was present. Those communities that now most extensively employ lay preachers, very rarely hear them in the presence of the pastor.

But the bishop of Jerusalem, our common mother, and that of Cæsarea, an apostolic church, not only deny that laymen were unaccustomed to preach, even in the presence of bishops, but quote Bishops Neon, and Celsus, and Atticus, blessed brethren, *i. e.*, gone to bliss, as exhorting laymen to preach to the people. If any deference, then, is due to the earliest ecclesiastical records, the practice of limiting to the pastors the right to preach is an innovation; and deference to the fathers, as well as to the Scriptures, demands the restoration of lay preaching.

After the sermon, "all rose up and stood to pray."* Tertullian says that, in his time, they prayed towards the east, for which he gives mystical reasons, if reasons they can be called; for one of them is founded on a false translation by the Septuagint. Tertullian calls the east a type of Christ.† Clement of Alexandria, however, tells us, the east is the image of the day of our (new) birth, when light shone out of darkness.‡ Origen's foolish wisdom on this point is omitted on account of the length to which he runs. The heathens therefore accused the Christians of adoring the rising sun. But numerous passages express the ancient practice of looking up to heaven in prayer.

Those prayers that were offered to God *sine monitore* Cyprian describes as modest prayers,§ accompanied with tears and groans. The people pronounced a loud Amen, Justin declares. He speaks of all the people consenting,||

* Justin Martyr, Apol. p. 98.

† Strom. vii.

+ Orientem Christi figuram.

§ De Orat. Domin.

|| Apol. i. 97. ἐπευφημήσαντος παντὸς τοῦ λαοῦ.

which condemns the preposterous practice of praying in a tongue unknown to them. Cyprian censures the putting into the priesthood of any but those whom it appears, or is certain, God will hear, which again confutes the assertion, that the evil character of the man cannot invalidate his ministry; a doctrine that shows the character of its authors; for it was never thought of till priests became wicked, all the ancients agreeing that respect was due to none but good ministers.

With regard to the Lord's prayer, as we have no instance in Scripture of its being used as a form, so have we none in the earliest fathers. Clement of Alexandria concludes his *Pædagogus*, or Christian instructor, with a prayer; but not the Lord's prayer. During the earliest ages, we cannot find an instance of the use of this form; though it is certain that the churches added the doxology, "Thine is the kingdom," &c., which our Lord never uttered, though it is now taken for a part of his prayer. "A Christian forgives," says Clement, "and justly prays, 'Forgive us, as we forgive.'"*

Tertullian and Cyprian comment on the prayer, as the law and form for prayer; but they speak of praying according to circumstances, and they assure each other of being remembered in their public prayers, while everything concurs to prove that the Christian church had, during the first centuries, no prescribed form of prayer.† Tertullian shows the use they made of their hands, "stretching them out in the form of a cross," which excludes the idea of their holding a prayer-book, and Origen declares they prayed, "Closing the eyes of sense and waking up those of the soul."‡ The worship of the primitive church, through three hundred years, was unquestion-

* Strom. vii. 537.

† Tertullian de Orat. Dom.

‡ Μύσας τοὺς τῆς αἰσθήσεως ὀφθαλμοὺς καὶ ἐγείρας τοὺς τῆς ψυχῆς. Cont. Cels. lib. vii. 362.

ably like that of those who have no liturgy, though they may sometimes use the Lord's prayer.

"Not the place, but the congregation of the elect, I call a church," says Clement of Alexandria.* "Every place is, in truth, holy, where we receive the knowledge of God."†

Justin Martyr tells Trypho, that, "In every part of the earth, God receives the sacrifices of Christians."‡

Eusebius informs us, that Dionysius of Alexandria affirms, "They held their assemblies in a field, a farm, a desert, a ship, an inn, a prison."§ When they began to have a separate place for worship, the name given to it was, not the church, but the church's house.|| Tertullian says, "The simple house of our Dove, always on elevated and open places, and towards the light, loves the figure of the Holy Spirit, the east, the figure of Christ."

As we advance towards the end of the third century, passages are accumulated to prove that the building was called the church; but it may be doubted whether, even then, the assembly is not always intended. Of consecration of places no vestige can be found.

It may be necessary to observe, that Origen shows the prayers and praises of the church to have been offered "to God alone, the Lord of the universe, and God, the Word, his only begotten."¶ Therefore the one God over all is to be supplicated and entreated to be propitious to us." This excludes all prayers to the Virgin, and to angels or saints.**

The unity of the church is always said to consist in the doctrine held by all. "For the God being one, and the Lord one; on this account, also, it is supremely precious,

* Strom. vii. + Ibid. vii. 520. † Dial. 344. § Lib. vii. c. 22.

|| The Christian fasts and moral discipline will be considered under the following head of doctrine, and the synods must be omitted, both for want of space, and because the fourth century, which may be called the age of councils, is that of the first *general* council held at Nice, and is beyond our era.

On Ministerial Vestments, see Appendix B. On the Creed, Appendix C.

¶ Cont. Cels. lib. viii. p. 432.

** P. 420.

praised on account of the unity ; being an imitation of the one origin (the first church at Jerusalem). Therefore, the one church has, by the nature of the one God, been united into one lot, which heresies attempt to split into many. In substance, therefore, and thought, and origin, and excellence, we say the ancient Catholic church is alone, arranging into the unity of one faith, which is from both Testaments, or rather according to one Testament, at different times, by the will of one God, collecting those whom God has foreordained ;* knowing before the foundation of the world they would be just. Cyprian says, "What was intended for all the apostles was said to Peter, that it might exhibit the unity of the whole."† "There is one episcopate, a part of which is held by each bishop. He cannot have God as his father who has not the church as his mother;" a favourite quotation with those who are unwilling to know, or at least to confess, that this church is declared by Cyprian to consist of men who hold the faith of the Trinity, which he calls the sacrament of unity, and the bond of concord inseparably cohering ; and of those who are united by the love of the truth, living in holiness ; so that we are to congratulate ourselves when wicked men are separated from the church ; that the doves and sheep of Christ may not be infected by poisonous contagion. Even Dodwell‡ confesses that the unity which Cyprian preaches is not that of the Catholic church, as Rome would say, but that of a single church, with its bishop ; nor can any one intelligently read the *Treatise on the Unity of the Church* without perceiving that its author had a congregational church in his eye ; while a national church, containing all sorts of men, is most abhorrent from Cyprian's views. It is observable, too, that Cyprian imitates Tertullian in applying the word *sect* to the true church, as Paul in the *Acts of the Apostles*.

* Strom. vii. 549.

† De Unit.

‡ Dissert. Cyprian.

We have passed rapidly over that which is practical, rather than dogmatical, or we might have observed, that as the apostasy advances, churches disappear behind the bishops, till such a letter as Clement wrote from the church at Rome to that in Corinth would be a prodigy. The support of the ministry is scarcely mentioned, except that the Theodotians and Montanists gave their pastors a monthly salary. Abundant evidence, however, exists, that the contributions of Christians were purely voluntary, and that some portion of liberty still remained to create considerable variety in the customs of the churches, which, being deemed consistent with the essential unity, gave no offence.*

* Cyp. Pref. ad Concil. Carthag. p. 397, Ep. 79; Socrates, lib. v. c. 22.

LECTURE V.

THE SACRAMENTS AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS.

THE analogy of the ancient church, which we have seen employed so mischievously to introduce an unscriptural priesthood, would never have led us to suppose that the Christian sacraments were endued with the saving virtue which human depravity has always loved to attach to ritual observances, rather than to the work of Christ, or his Spirit. As the ceremonial law had no rite which either operated physically on the soul, or was morally identified with the sanctity of the recipient, Jehovah, by the prophet, called the Jews uncircumcised; for, says the apostle, "If thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision." The earliest fathers, therefore, are not guilty of that perversion of the sacraments which, however, too soon became the crying sin of what was called the church.

Not from Scripture, but from heathen Rome, the Latin church derived the word sacrament; as the Greeks also borrowed from paganism their term mystery. Any symbol being called a sacrament, Tertullian speaks of the sacraments, not only of the bread and the cup, but also of "the lions of Mithra, the sacraments of arid and heated nature."*

* *Advers. Marcionem*, lib. i. c. 13. "If the sacraments had not a certain similitude of those things of which they are sacraments they would not be sacraments. But from this similitude they mostly take the names of the things themselves. As, therefore, after a certain mode the sacrament of the body of Christ is the body of Christ, the sacrament of the blood of Christ is the blood of Christ, so the sacrament of faith is faith." August. *Bonifacio de Bap. Parvulorum* v. 235.

PART I.—*Of Baptism.*

JUSTIN MARTYR says, "But how we dedicate ourselves to God, having been renewed by Christ, we will explain. For whoever are persuaded and believe that the things taught by us are true, and promise to live, or engage that they can live, accordingly, they are taught to ask of God, with prayer and fasting, the remission of their former sins; we also praying and fasting with them, they are afterwards led by us where there is water, and after the same mode of regeneration as we ourselves were regenerated, they are regenerated. For in the name of God the Father and Sovereign of all, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they are then washed with water. For Christ said, "Except ye be born again, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." "How they who have sinned and repent escape their sins is expressed by the prophet, 'Wash you; make you clean; put away the iniquity of your doings.'" This reason we have learned from the apostles, that as in our first birth we were ignorant; so, that we might not remain children of necessity, or of ignorance, but of choice and of knowledge, we obtain, by the water, the remission of former sins. And there is named over him that wishes to be regenerated, and has repented of his sins, the name of the Father of all, pronouncing this name, as leading him that is to be washed to the laver. But this laver, or washing, is called illumination, as those who have learned these things are enlightened in their mind. The demons, having heard this washing proclaimed, by the prophets, endeavoured that those who entered their temples should sprinkle themselves; but at least that they should go away and wash before they enter the temples."*

Again; Trypho is asked, "What is circumcision to me who have the testimony of God? What need is there of baptism to him who is baptized with the Holy Spirit?"

* Just. Apol. i. p. 88—91. Thirlby, Paris, 94.

Justin's statement may have been modified by a very natural wish to commend Christianity to the more philosophical heathens; but it cannot thoroughly satisfy any party among Christians. It represents, however, the change in the person's state, from an unbeliever to a believer, as the antecedent, not the consequence, of baptism. "They who have been renewed dedicate themselves, and promise to live, or pledge themselves to be able to live accordingly."* The peculiar expression exhibits an engagement made under a consciousness of the moral power to fulfil it, which none but those who are "made new" could sincerely profess.

That "they are taught to pray and to ask of God, fasting, the remission of their former sins" may be deemed a proof that forgiveness had not yet been obtained; though it is really no proof at all, whatever may have been Justin's views. One who regarded baptism as a mere sign, not to say seal, of forgiveness previously obtained, would naturally, and most properly, pray that this forgiveness may really be enjoyed, and that his baptism may be a declaration, before the world, of what has already passed in his own breast. In fact, no sincere man could act otherwise; though he were most clearly and positively convinced that he was already forgiven; for the more sure he was that forgiveness ought to precede, the more earnestly he would pray for it. But why ask for what they have already obtained? may be thought by some a sage question. This, however, we are, if Christians, doing every day.

The Martyr could not mean to intimate that baptism conferred either regeneration or pardon, when he asked Trypho, "What need is there of baptism to him who is baptized with the Holy Spirit?" We are sure he did not wish to discard the rite as needless, and therefore must conclude that he intended to exhibit the baptism of the

* *καὶ βιοῦν οὕτως δυνάσθαι ὑπὸσχνῶνται.*

Spirit as preceding, and as that which saves; so that the absolute necessity of water baptism to salvation is here denied. We are confirmed in this view, when we hear him say, "The laver, or washing, is called illumination, as those who have learned these things are enlightened in their mind." He had before said that those who had been persuaded and believed the things taught by us ¹⁰ to be true are baptized, and now he says such are enlightened in their mind, and therefore the baptism is called illumination, not as conferring that blessing, but as conferred on the illuminated. By parity of reason, the baptism is called regeneration, as it is performed on men who have been regenerated.

This is still further confirmed by his own reasoning with Trypho. For, alluding to the words, "Wash you; make you clean," he says, "Verily Isaiah did not send you to a bath there to wash away murder and other sins, which not all the water of the sea would be sufficient to put away; but, as it seems, this was anciently the salutary washing, which follows repentance, and is no longer by the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of a heifer, but by faith, through the blood of Christ and his death, who died for this."

It is not pretended that Justin is exempt from the appearance of confounding the sign and the thing signified, or of representing the latter as conveyed by the former; for, after all, opposing parties will claim his suffrage. But subsequent ages have shown that, on sacramental subjects, this is no small praise. Justin had not seen the mischief done to the church by placing salvation in its rites; and the inaccuracy of his statements is therefore entitled to the more excuse. His previous heathenism probably contributed to his faults, on this, as on other subjects; and as he is the first who treats on baptism, which Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp left untouched; so it should be remembered that, as the second century was then more than half gone, corruption was considerably advanced.

But though we have now conceded to the advocates of baptismal regeneration all that they can claim from Justin, we must still contend that when we candidly allow the better part of his language to explain the worse, he remains a witness to regeneration by the Spirit, and justification by faith, prior to baptism, which at last is said to do that which it publicly declares to have been done. Of his regeneration by faith, by water, and by wood, we say nothing, for it may mean anything.

“Christ committed to his disciples,” Irenæus affirms, “the power of regeneration to God, saying, ‘Go teach, baptizing in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost.’ For as from dry wheat, one mass cannot be made without moisture, nor one bread; so neither could we, the many, become one in Christ, without the water, which is from heaven. Our bodies, by that laver, which is to incorruption, have received unity; but our souls, by the Spirit; whence, both are necessary.”* “The water, which is from heaven,” would be pronounced a strange, absurd, and heterodox expression, if employed by a modern divine, to declare that Christ, by “born of water,” did not mean regeneration by baptism, as, indeed, he could not, when he said to Nicodemus, “Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?” For why must a teacher of the Israelites know Christian baptism, which, strictly speaking, was not then instituted? But a master of Israel ought to have known that God promised, by Ezekiel, to sprinkle clean water upon his people, by giving his Spirit to create a new heart. This “water from heaven” must not now be scorned, since Irenæus has sanctified the phrase. It must also be observed, that he says, “Our bodies, by the laver, which is to incorruption, receive unity; but our souls, by the Spirit.” The effect of the water of baptism is restricted to the body, and to unity with the church, and the soul is affected only by the Spirit.

* Iren. lib. iii. c. 19, p. 280.

Both are said to be necessary, as if they were not identified, but were distinct things, that might be separated, though they should be conjoined.

Clement of Alexandria thus exhorts: "Come, come, O my young flock; for except ye be born again, and regenerated, as the Scripture says, ye will not receive him that is truly a Father, nor will ye ever enter the kingdom of heaven. For how shall a stranger be permitted to enter? When he is enrolled, and become a citizen, and receives the Father; then he will be among the number of the sons of the Father; then he will be counted worthy to inherit; then he (God) will communicate of the parental kingdom to the genuine beloved Son. This is the church of the firstborn, which consists of many good children. These are the firstborn that are written in heaven, and associate festively with so many myriads of angels. We are the firstborn children; we are the alumni of God, who are the genuine friends of the firstborn; who, first among men, knew God; first, are withdrawn from sin; first, are separated from the devil."* Here regeneration is not baptism, but a moral, or spiritual change. The rite is compared to the enrolment of a citizen, which does not create, but recognizes a claim previously founded on property, or birth.

"By the laver alone, he, *i.e.*, Christ, is perfected, and by the descent of the Spirit he is sanctified. This very thing happened for us whose exemplar the Lord was. Being baptized, we are illuminated; being illuminated, we are made sons; being sons, we are perfected; being perfected, we are immortalized. 'I said, ye are gods, and all sons of the Most High.' In various ways this work is called grace, and illumination, and the perfect laver. A laver, indeed, by which we are cleansed from sins; but grace by which the punishments due to sins are remitted; but illumination by which that holy saving light is seen, that is, by

* Admon. ad Gentes, lib. xl.

which we are sharp-sighted to what is divine."* More, in this strain, follows; but it is equally vague and figurative, and may mean anything or nothing, though it was intended to appear most sublime. This illumination, which is said to operate like the removing of a cataract, as both Clement and Tertullian say, was intended, by the former writer, to prepare the initiated for the esoteric doctrine of the true gnosticism. For Clement is frank enough to inform us of the commerce he held with heathenism, observing that, "Among the barbarian philosophers, the name of regeneration was given to instruction and illumination;" and "I have begotten you," says the celebrated apostle, "by the gospel."† By this, and other expressions, it would appear that the instruction was thought to regenerate, and the baptism to introduce the convert into that new world which was formed by the Christian church. But we are here informed that the early fathers, who were pagans by birth, and philosophers by education, mingled the ideas of the heathen mysteries with the Christian sacraments; and adopted language which no party would now defend. For they who are baptized are said to be not only illuminated and adopted, but perfected and immortalized, and made gods. The heathen apotheosis!

As far as we can ascertain that the early fathers adopted what is called the doctrine of the *opus operatum*, or the efficacy of the mere rite of baptism; we can shew that they believed, not only that the soul received a certain effect, but that the body received immortality by baptism. For our bodies, Irenæus maintains, receive the unity of incorruption by baptism, our souls by the Spirit. Did he think that those who die unbaptized would not have immortal bodies?

Nay, if we believe all that these fathers say, which is more than they did themselves; we must conclude that the heathen poet anticipated the truth, when he said, ἀριστον

* Pælag. lib. i. c. 6. p. 69.

† Strom. lib. iv. 403.

μὲν ὕδωρ;* for water itself is holy, not only as sanctified by the Spirit to a holy use, but as having itself that which made it worthy of such an application. "O man, you have primarily to venerate the age of waters, that it is an ancient substance; hence its dignity, that it is the seal of the Divine Spirit, more grateful, truly, than the other elements. For all was as yet darkness, unformed, without the ornament of the stars, and the abyss was gloomy, and the earth unfurnished, and heaven rude. The liquid element always perfect matter, joyous, simple, pure of itself; a worthy vehicle lying before God. Hence, we little fishes are born in water according to our fish Jesus Christ."† Lest this should be thought peculiar to Tertullian, we refer to Theophilus of Antioch for a correspondent passage.‡

Though the Latin church had transferred to their own tongue, from the Greek, the word baptize, Tertullian does not employ it, but almost always uses *tingo*, to tinge. When he says, "We little fishes are born in water,"§ he refers, not to little children, but to Christians in general; alluding to the monogram, *Ϡθς*, a fish, formed out of the initials of the Greek words, Jesus Christ, God's Son the Saviour. He speaks of trine baptism,|| repeating the rite each time the name of one of the persons of the Trinity is mentioned. To prove the necessity of baptism, he appeals to the words, "Except a man be born of water."

If infant baptism is taught by the early fathers, it is, as in the Scriptures, with sufficient clearness to satisfy its advocates, but not to silence its opponents. Justin Martyr affirms, "There are many men and women of sixty, or seventy years, who, from *children*, were made disciples to Christ, who remain uncorrupt; and I glory that I can shew such, from every nation."¶ The discipleship of these

* Pindar. Olymp. i. c. i.

† Tertullian de Baptismo, c. 1 and 3.

‡ Ad Autol. lib. ii.

§ c. 1.

|| Advers. Prax. c. 26.

¶ *καὶ πολλοὶ τινες καὶ πολλοὶ ἐξηκοντούται καὶ ἐβδομηκοντούται οἱ ἐκ παίδ μαθητεύθησαν τῷ Χριστῷ ἄφθοροι διαμένονσι· καὶ εὐχομαι κατὰ πᾶν γένος ἀνθρώπων τοιούτους δεῖξαι.* Apolog. prim. 62.

children is thus carried back to the days of the Apostle John, and to the original commission Justin seems to allude, μαθητευσατε, "Disciple all nations, baptizing them."

Irenæus speaks of Christ, who "came to save all by himself; all, I say, who are regenerated by him to God, infants, and little children, and boys, and young men, and elders."* We have seen how the fathers employ the name of the sign, baptism, for the thing signified, regeneration; and in the Greek copy, recovered from Epiphanius, we read, "as to the denial of the baptism of regeneration towards God," which shews what Irenæus intended by infants being regenerated to God. It is, indeed, difficult to see how either he or Justin should have spoken thus of children, unless they believed them either regenerated or baptized in consequence of being born of Christian parents; and on the former supposition the sign must certainly have been conferred where it was believed that the blessing signified was enjoyed.

Tertullian shews that the practice of infant baptism prevailed in his days; for he attempts to dissuade parents from exposing children to the danger of unpardonable sin;† and such he considered sin, at least of the grosser kind, committed after baptism. He quotes the text which is now adduced as an authority for infant baptism, "Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy,"‡ to prove that they were "designated to holiness, and by this also to salvation;" so that his appeals to Scripture are in favour of what his private superstition would avoid.

Cyprian informs us that, in the Council of Carthage, where sixty-six bishops were assembled, none agreed with the one who thought that baptism should be deferred to the eighth day, but all decreed that it might be performed

* Omnes enim venit per semetipsum salvare: omnes inquam qui per eum renascuntur in Deum, infantes et parvulos et pueros et juvenes et seniores. Cont. Hær., lib. ii. c. 39.

† De Bapt. c. 18.

‡ De Anima, c. 39.

at any time. This was the only controversy on the subject of infant baptism, in the early ages of the church ; for the propriety of the practice was never denied ; and that baptism was supposed to succeed to circumcision,* as the seal of God's covenant with his people and their seed, is shewn by this abortive attempt to restrict baptism, like circumcision, to the eighth day after birth. Augustine belongs not to our province, except as he declares that infant baptism was introduced by no decrees of councils, but was derived from the apostles. He was sufficiently acquainted with the councils to be a competent witness to the negative part of this sentence, and of the positive we can judge for ourselves ; for the only acts of the Apostles which are entitled to credit are those which are recorded by inspiration.

That the mode of baptism adopted by the early Christians is not easily ascertained, will naturally be deemed a proof of the small importance they attached to that question to which some now ascribe so much. Justin merely says, "We bring the candidate where there is water," which shews that they did not bring the water to him ; but this is true, even where nothing more than the modern font is employed. The martyr, however, speaks of a cistern, when disputing with the Jews, to whose baptisms he compares those of Christians. Now, as we know that the Jewish law never commanded one person to put another under water, so we are sure that the majority of its "divers baptisms" were sprinklings. Justin accordingly affirms that "the dæmons, having heard this (baptismal) washing proclaimed by the prophets, endeavoured that those who entered their temples should sprinkle themselves ; and at last that they should go and wash before they entered." Here washing may, indeed, seem to be made superior to sprinkling, as a closer imitation of Christian baptism.†

The Egyptian Clement thus exhorts ; "Receive the

* August. Seleuc. ep. 103.

† Apol. i.; Paris, 94.

rational water, be washed, ye polluted; sprinkle yourselves from the (evil) habit, by the true drops.”*

Tertullian, usually employing *tingo*, to tinge, for baptism, uses also *mergo*, to merge, but never *submergo*. He speaks of Christ’s pouring water on his disciples, as a baptism, which Peter refused; but if he had not already been baptized by John, Christ would not have said, “He that has been washed needs not again.”† Taking his various expressions together, we should suppose that he thought the baptism was performed on a person standing in the water, by pouring water upon him, as the orientals bathe, by going into a river, and pouring its water on their heads.

To clinical baptism, or that which was administered to those who were sick in bed, lest they should die unbaptized, it may seem useless to appeal; as the practice marks the advance of superstition. But it also shews that those who adopted it thought affusion to be real baptism. This is rendered more certain by the manner in which Tertullian speaks, in his Treatise of Baptism: “Others, violently enough, contend that the apostles had what filled the place of baptism; when in the ship being sprinkled with the waves, they were covered; and that Peter, also, himself, going through the sea, was sufficiently merged. But I think it is one thing to be sprinkled and intercepted by the violence of the sea, and another to be tinged by the discipline of religion.”‡ Here we should observe that Tertullian opposes the notion that the apostles were thus baptized, not because this was not immersion, but because they were sprinkled by the violence of the sea, instead of submitting to a religious rite. There is good sense in this distinction, for neither immersion nor affusion is baptism, except as the performance of the rite of religion is the design. The whole passage proves that Septimius thought

* Admon. to Gent. 46.

† De Bapt. c. 12.

‡ *Ibid.*

the application of water to the body, not of the body to water, with the religious design of dedication to God, was Christian baptism.

The Syriac version employs the root **ܕܡܝ** to express the action, and the noun **ܕܡܝܢܐ** for the rite of baptism. The radical signification is, to stand, which is seen in an instance free from all controversy, the word **ܕܡܝܢܐ** a pillar, employed in Gal. ii. 9. "James, Cephas, and John, seemed to be pillars." The standing ceremony, then, which is the direct opposite of the dipping ceremony, is the phrase employed by the mother of all churches, forbidding us to suppose that when it was translated in the New Testament by **βαπτίζω**, the idea of immersion was intended. It may, indeed, be doubted whether any reference to the ritual *mode* was designed to be conveyed by the Syriac; for the moral idea of a man taking his standing, or his station, in the Christian church, may be the meaning; but if the mode be insisted upon, then the idea conveyed by the word is that of a man standing upright, like a pillar, to have water poured upon him.

We find the fathers, contrary to the bent of their own minds, dropping occasional explanations which prove that they considered themselves to have used sacramental language on the efficacy of baptism. Who can take the gage of Tertullian's mind from his own fervid, extravagant language, and not see that when he says, "This is my body," he means the figure of my body? Such an admission from such a man is a volume of explanation. All that conveys another meaning was his own, the very genius and soul of the African orator; but this single word of cool, scriptural, rational explanation was forced from him by the power of truth; and was the more of God as it was the less of Tertullian. The fathers called baptism, regeneration, and remission of sins, "that is, the figure" of them; but went on indulging their own genius and love of exaggeration, till

at length the explanation was forgotten and altogether denied.*

The profound silence of the apostolical fathers on the subject of baptism, contrasted with the language of the third and following centuries, must convince every attentive observer, that what the men who lived nearest to the apostles ascribed to the spiritual, was, by their successors, if such they can be called, attributed to the ritual part of our religion.†

* The way in which Tertullian gets over the difficulty arising from the want of evidence, that the twelve apostles ever received Christian baptism which he makes essential to salvation, may be seen in his *Treatise on Baptism*, c. 12: "And now I will answer, as I shall be able, to those who deny that the apostles were tinged (*tinctos*). For if they had entered into the human baptism of John, they were also desiring that of the Lord, as far as the Lord himself had defined one baptism, saying to Peter, unwilling to have water poured on him, 'He who has once washed has no need again;' which therefore he certainly would not have said to one not tinged; which is express proof against those who take away from the apostles even John's baptism, that they may destroy the sacrament of water. The Lord himself, a debtor to no repentance, was tinged; was it not necessary to sinners?" Perhaps this is one of the instances in which Lactantius said, Tertullian was *multum obscurus*, and as we are not sure that we have exactly caught his meaning, so we suspect, that he did not himself think he had proved his point. He supposes that the apostles had all received John's baptism, which cannot be proved true, and he makes John's baptism nearly, if not quite, identical with that of Christ, which is certainly false. But he finds a proof that Peter had been baptized, in the words of Christ to him, "He that has been washed needeth not, save to wash his feet."

+ The doctrine of baptisms, as held by the fathers, would not be complete without the mention of confirmation, for this was, in their view, not a mere appendage to the former, but an integral part of the initiatory rite. It consisted in the laying on of the hands of the baptizer, in order to confer the gift of the Holy Spirit. This does not appear, by Justin's account of baptism, to have been at that time practised, but it was soon after introduced. It seems to have originated in a mistaken notion, that the conferring of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the apostles' hands was a spiritual blessing always attendant on baptism; though the Scriptures show that it was a miraculous power imparted to some of the first converts for the confirmation of the gospel. In the baptism of Lydia and the Philippian jailor we have no mention of it; and in the peculiar case of Cornelius it was so far from being consequent on baptism, that the descent of the Spirit on the Gentiles, enabling them to speak with tongues, was assigned as a reason for venturing

PART II.—*The Lord's Supper.*

ON this subject the earliest writers, both he who addressed Diognetus, and Clement of Rome, are silent; while Ignatius, who comes next, is so figurative and bombastic, that he is the worst of all evidences where the grand question is whether the words of Christ are to be understood according to the letter, or in the sacramental sense.

Justin affirms, "We bring (the convert) to those that are called brethren, where they are collected, to offer common prayers, both for themselves and for the illuminated person, and for all others, earnestly. Prayers being ended, we salute each other with a kiss. Then there is presented to him that presides over the brethren, bread and a cup of water, and mixture; and he, having taken, offers up praise and glory to the Father of all, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and makes much thanksgiving, for having been counted by him worthy of these things. He, having finished the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present consent, saying, Amen, which, in Hebrew, signifies, 'so be it.' But the president, having given thanks, and all the people responded, those who are called among us deacons give to every one of those present to partake of the bread, and wine, and water, for which thanks had been given, and to those that are not present they carry. This food is called among us, Eucharist (thanksgiving), of which it is lawful to no other to partake than to him that believes the things taught by us true, and has been washed with that washing that is for remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and is living so as Christ delivered to us. For, not as common bread, nor common drink, we take

on the new and bold step of admitting them to baptism. "Can any man forbid water," said Peter, "that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost even as we?"

The modern confirmation, administered, many years after, by one who had nothing to do with the baptism, is as remote from the practice of the early fathers as from the doctrine of the Scriptures.

these things, but, just as by God's word, Jesus Christ, our Saviour, was made flesh, and had flesh and blood, for our salvation; so also we are taught that that food, blessed (by thanksgiving) through prayer of the word that is from him, from which are nourished our own blood and flesh by transmutation, is the flesh and the blood of that incarnate Jesus. For the apostles, in the memoranda made by them, which are called Gospels, so delivered, that Jesus commanded them; having taken bread, after giving thanks, he said: 'This do for the memorial of me, this is my body.' And the cup likewise, having taken, and having given thanks, he said, 'This is my blood;' and to those alone he imparted.

"But we always remind each other, afterwards, of those things, and we that possess supply those that are in want; and we are always with each other. And for *all* those things by which we are fed, we bless the Maker of all, through his Son, Jesus Christ, and by the Holy Spirit." Then follows a passage on public worship; after which he says again, "We having ceased from prayer, bread is brought in, and wine and water, and the president sends up prayers as well as thanksgivings as far as he has ability, and the people respond, saying the Amen; and the distribution and participation of the things thanked for, or blessed, is made to every one; and to those not present they are sent by the deacons."*

Departures from Scripture are here obvious. Water, of which Christ said nothing, seems to be twice introduced; till, at length, Cyprian complains that some had nothing but water in the cup; and the elements were sent to the absent, which Christ did not command, and the church does not now practise. The "transmutation" is not only of "the food to be the flesh and blood of Jesus;" but to be our flesh and blood. But what accuracy can we expect

from one who makes the Holy Spirit a mediator, through whom we offer our prayers? We pass on to Irenæus.

“ By that cup, which is a creature, he who shed his own blood, confirmed, *i. e.*, made us sure of, his own body, from which he nourishes our blood; and that bread, which is from the creature, confirmed the truth of his own body, from which he nourishes our bodies. When, therefore, the mixed cup, and the broken bread, perceive the word of God, it becomes the Eucharist of the body and blood of Christ, from which the substance of our flesh is increased and consists.” “ By this,” he says, “ immortality is conferred on our bodies.”* Here seems to be an approach to more than sacramental signs and seals; but it is not certain that Irenæus means anything beyond what they who have Scriptural ideas would intend, when expressing their confidence in the spiritual blessings that may be expected from the due celebration of the Supper.

In a moral exhortation, Clement of Alexandria introduces the doctrine of the Supper: “ ‘ Use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake,’ says the apostle to Timothy, a water drinker; very beautifully affording a suitable help to a sick and languid body, which needed healing, but recommending a *little*, lest by using much, he should need more medicine. The natural and sober drink, therefore, necessary for thirst is water. The Lord once supplied, flowing from a rock, to the ancient Hebrews, only this simple drink of temperance. For those wanderers much needed temperance. Afterwards the holy vine germinated the prophetic bunch. This is a sign to those who are instructed to rest from error: the great bunch, the Word, who was pressed for us, the blood of the grape, the Word, choosing to be tempered with water, as also his blood is tempered (or mingled) with salvation. Twofold is the blood of the Lord; *this*, its carnal (part), by which we are redeemed from corruption; and *that*, its spiritual, by

* Lib. v. c. 2.

which we are anointed. This is to drink the blood of Jesus; to partake of the Lord's incorruptibility. But the Spirit is the power of the Word, as the blood is of the flesh. Analogously, therefore, is the wine mingled with water; and with man, the Spirit. And the one mixture is received unto faith, and the other, the Spirit, leads to incorruption. But again, the mixture of both, the drink and the Word, is called the Eucharist, a celebrated and noble favour (or grace); of which they who partake by faith are sanctified body and soul, since the paternal will, by the Spirit and the Word, has mystically attuned man, that divine mixture. For the Spirit dwells in the soul that is led by him, and the flesh in the Word; on which account the Word was made flesh."*

If this passage should appear unintelligible, let not all the blame be thrown on the translator, who is not unwilling to take his share; while he doubts whether Clement could have given an intelligible version into any other language of which he was master. Translation is the test of sense; for mysticism, at second hand, is always aggravated; the original shadows of meaning refusing to be called back, in order to be described in other words. Let us, however, attempt to analyze what we can ascertain. The greater part, if not the whole, of the argument is founded on an unscriptural addition to the Lord's Supper, the mixing of water with the wine; so that he who should insist upon adhering to the bread and the wine which the Lord appointed to be the symbols of his body and blood, would lose the whole charm of this mystical dissertation. Again; the Spirit, if we understand Clement, is the Holy Ghost, and he performs the great work, though he is represented by the water, of which Christ, in the institution of the Supper, said nothing. This mystical water, strange to tell, *anoints* us, and sanctifies the soul; while the wine seems to have no other office but that of conferring incor-

* Pæd. lib. ii. c. 2.

ruptibility on the body. But it is useless to attempt to go further, except to say, that Tertullian's materialism seems to be contained here; for a physical union with the body and soul is made the means of giving incorruptibility or immortality to both. They who could revel in such mysticism were liable to adopt, and to lead others to adopt, any error, however gross; for when men, delighted with half-formed ideas, flit from figure to figure, they conceal from themselves the grossness or folly that lurks behind.

If it be said that here is, at least, a hint of the doctrine of transubstantiation, it must be admitted that the passage is foolishly mystical enough to hint anything that we wish to prove; but then it should be observed, that not merely the transubstantiation of the elements, but even much more—that of the communicants is taught; for these are supposed to be made incorruptible. The resurrection is derived, not merely from that of our Lord, but from his body having seen no corruption; and though it could not be pretended that ours do not corrupt after death, some vital germ, like that of a seed, is supposed to be imparted to our bodies, to secure their revival to immortality. Nor should it be forgotten, that all this is ascribed to the cup alone; for of the bread no mention occurs; so that the Church of Rome, by denying the cup to the laity, has taken away from them Clement's panacea of immortality, which is in the water chiefly; and, in an inferior way, in the wine.

The Alexandrian, in another expression, opposes the grossness of the Roman doctrine; for, if he had merely said, "We drink of the blood of Jesus," it would have been deemed a proof of the dogma of transubstantiation; but when we ask Clement what he means by the expression, he answers, "To partake of the Lord's incorruptibility;" so that these strong expressions were designed to teach, not some marvellous transmutation of the elements, which are the means, but the attainment of the end, life and immortality through Christ. We forbear to quote further; though

Clement says the wine *allegorizes* the blood;* and our Lord, in the Gospel of John educed by symbols, "Eat my flesh, and drink my blood."

Tertullian tells Marcion, "The bread taken and distributed to his disciples, Christ made his own body, saying, 'This is my body,'" which might be supposed to be decisive evidence of transubstantiation; but Septimius adds, "That is, the figure of my body."† After this, how can we be sure that other fathers would not have explained their own most positive language in the same way? If a Protestant had given this explanation, a Romanist would have said, "Tertullian positively declared Christ made the bread his own body;" but we may now leave the father himself to answer for us, "that is, the figure of his body." Cyprian declares, "We have the image of the sacrifice of Christ in the bread and wine."‡ He contends that wine must be used, and not water only; because, if we receive wine only, the body of Christ would be without us; if water only, we should be without Christ; but the mixture of water and wine shews the union of Christ to his church."§ He that can understand these words, we do not say reasons, will, perhaps, be wiser than Cyprian himself; but one thing is clear, that he thought the elements were designed to instruct the mind, or to shew the union of Christ to his church, which is rational and Scriptural, but very remote from transubstantiation.

PART III.—*Christian Ethics.*

THE picture of Christian morals, presented by Justin to the people of Rome, contains the following features. "After receiving the Christian doctrine, we abandoned the pagan deities, and, through his Son, worship him who is the only uncreated God. Those of us who before delighted in impurities now rejoice in sobriety; those who practised

* Pædag. lib. i. c. 6.

+ Advers. Marc. lib. iv. c. 40.

† Ep. 63, 149.

§ Ep. 63, 151.

the magical arts, now have devoted themselves to the benevolent and eternal Father; those who sought to acquire wealth, above all things, now have their possessions common, and give to him that needeth; those who hated and slaughtered each other, and, being of different tribes, had no intercourse, after the appearance of Christ, living in the same communion, pray for enemies and endeavour to convert those that unjustly hate us.”*

The beautiful picture of Christian character presented to Diognetus is too long for insertion, as is also that which Minucius Felix gives.

Clement of Alexandria, in his *Pædagogus*, or *Instruction for a Christian*, gives minute directions for eating and drinking, affirming that other men live to eat; we eat to live; choosing that food which will provide health.† In his fourth chapter, he prohibits gold and silver in furniture. Instrumental music he forbids, saying, “Our body should be the instrument, and our soul the musician.”‡

But we cannot tell what to make of his own morality, when we read the tenth chapter of his second book. He says, “God *required* polygamy when our race was to be multiplied,” though we know that the first polygamist is exhibited as a wicked man; and it has never been proved that the human race is increased by departure from monogamy, the original law of marriage. Now, he says, “To marry once is enjoined, solely for procreation, and second marriages are permitted to those only who have not the gift of continence; but they who remain in widowhood purchase heavenly glory.” Our Creator, however, has taught us that he provided marriage for the sake of society, saying, “It is not good for man to be alone.” We need no stronger proof of the mischievous consequences of attempting to contravene the laws of God, and be wise above what is written, than the fathers afford.

If we can give any credit to Clement himself, as speaking

* Apol. i. 60.

† Lib. ii. c. i.

‡ Ibid. c. 4.

the words of truth and soberness, rather than bearing false witness against the church of God, by rhetorical exaggeration, the manners of Christians in his day departed so far from the ideal perfection attempted to be enforced, as to prove that overdoing is undoing. "I know not how it is, but they change their forms and manners with the place, like the Polypus, which is said to resemble the rocks to which it is attached. For, after they come out of the congregation, they become like those with whom they converse, or rather they are convicted, by laying aside the hypocritical appearance of reverence, of being what they were not known to be; and having revered the discourse concerning God, they left it within (doors), but, without, they are maddened by atheistic love songs; and they who before were rhyming immortality bid farewell to it, saying, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.'" Were these primitive Christians? Or must we not believe the testimony of this father?*

The condemnation of second marriages, as decent adultery, seemed intended to contradict the apostle, who declared that, "If the husband be dead, a woman is loosed from the law of her husband; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man."

Tertullian's admiring disciple, Cyprian, is a witness of the pernicious effects of the false morality of his age, which produced such shoals of apostates in the hour of persecution, that when the storm had blown over, the church was more troubled to know what to do with those who had lapsed into idolatry, than she ought to have been by the most cruel efforts of pagan power. Instead of retracing her steps, however, and determining to look more carefully into the religion of those she received into her bosom, she was occupied with the question of immediate restoration, or a

* He denounces mere pleasure, καὶ ἐν γάμῳ, and affirms that Moses ἀπάγει τῶν ἐγκύων τοὺς ἄνδρας, which he derives, or fortifies, from the Mosaic charge, οὐκ ἔδεσσαι τὸν λαγὸν οὐδὲ τὴν ὕαιναν. *Pæd. lib. ii. c. 10, p. 139.*

penal exclusion for a given length of time. Examination of the real character of professors seems to have been banished from the church by questions of rites and forms.

Who can, on a comparison of the churches of the first with those of the third century, avoid perceiving, that in proportion as the theory of Christian morals had been made more severe, the practice of Christians had become more lax? For, already, the superior excellence of the earlier ages had become the theme of mournful confession by those very men to whom we are now invited to look as the paragons of excellence. But unhappily they did not discover that the second century, in straining to surpass the revealed standard of morals, had prepared the way for the corruptions of the third. The original idea of the ascetics was, to make all Christians a species of monks; but, defeated in their war against nature, and reason, and Scripture, they fell back upon the most immoral and pernicious of all principles, that there may be two species of Christians—some aspiring to obtain as much holiness as was possible, and others contented to have as little as was safe. Into this system the Eastern and Western churches, at length, settled down. Prelates, patriarchs, and popes, living in licentious luxury and pride, without the semblance of spiritual religion, agreed to admire monks in cells and hair shirts; while these, in their turn, revered the official sanctity of men whom the fathers of monkery would have doomed to excommunication and eternal flames. Yet this dislocation of all ancient ideas is called primitive, and is canonized by the authority of fathers. But he that is able and willing to trace up principles to their source, must admit that asceticism was originally introduced as *of the essence* of Christianity, and that the idea of appropriating it to a Brahminical caste was an afterthought, acquiesced in, from the necessity of adapting the mass of the church to the condition of the world, when the two became identified.

From this time, all extremes were harmonized. The

merit of the martyrs, and a worldly ambition to wear their crown, inflamed the imaginations of men who lapsed by scores into idolatry, to save their lives; while celibacy was exalted as the first of merits, monks were accused of sleeping with sacred virgins; fasting was imposed as a meritorious task, and bishops were made drunk that they might join in surreptitious ordinations; till, at length, the world knew not which to despise most—the extravagant pretences of the ascetic, who soared to live as angels, without eating, and drinking, and marrying; or the inconsistency of the multitude, who, professing to admire all this, sank below the more temperate heathens. Who can wonder if a discerning few sighed over the change from primitive times, and said, “O give us back the days when Diognetus was told how Christians lived in the world as the soul in the body, marrying like other men, and bringing up their children for God.”

LECTURE VI.

ON DEATH, THE FUTURE STATE, RESURRECTION, ANTICHRIST, AND
THE MILLENNIUM.

HERE the reader must prepare to meet strange fancies, some that we may call popish, and some ultra-Protestant.

PART I.—*On Death, the separate State, and the Resurrection.*

THAT the departed Christian immediately entered into bliss, may be thought to be the expressed opinion of Clement and his flock at Rome, when they say to the Corinthians, “Happy those presbyters who have finished their course;” which they were not, if tormented in purgatorial flames; but no such gloomy doctrine had yet made its appearance in the church.

The resurrection, as a tenet new to the Gentile world, naturally attracted the special attention of the early converts; and Clement’s famous illustration of this truth, by a fable, supposed to be a fact, must, however disgraceful to him, be discussed: “Let us behold the paradoxical sign that is in the eastern parts, about Arabia. For there is a bird that is named the Phœnix. This, being unique, lives five hundred years; and when about to depart by death, it makes itself a sepulchre of frankincense and myrrh, and the other aromatics; into which, when its time is up, it enters and dies. But of its corrupted flesh a worm is generated, which, nourished by the moisture of the dead creature, becomes feathered. Afterwards, being vigorous, it bears (aloft) that sepulchre, in which are the bones of its

progenitor; and, carrying them off, removes from the Arabian territory to that of Egypt, to what is called Heliopolis; and, by day, flying in the sight of all, deposits them on the altar of the sun, and so goes back again. The priests, therefore, inspect the records of the times, and find that it has come when the five hundredth year is completed. And shall we, then, think it great and wonderful, if the Creator of the universe shall accomplish the resurrection of all who holily serve him, in the confidence of a right faith, when, even by a bird, he shows us the magnitude of his promise?''*

That Clement should have shared with Tacitus in the ignorance, errors, and infirmities, of his age, was natural; but that professed scholars, living in a better-informed period, should regard such writers as oracles may excite something more than surprise. As Christians, however, we cannot but deplore the heathenism of the mind that dictated this passage, and of those who boast their descent from such fathers. For who can help seeing, and blushing to see, that Clement had a lurking reverence for the altar of the sun and its priests? How naturally and justly might one who adored Sol in his temple of Heliopolis say to him who wrote thus of the Phoenix, "Then you admit that nature owns our God, so that the unique bird of five centuries flies from distant lands to deposit the bones of its progenitor on our altars! Shall I cease, then, to worship at that fane which the greatest miracle in nature honours? If your religion teaches the doctrine confirmed by the single fact of the resurrection of Jesus, does not ours, by your own confession, exhibit it to the world every five hundred years?" Yet this Epistle of Clement, spiced with heathenism, strong as the aromatic tomb of the Phoenix, was read in the first churches after those of Paul or Peter, James or John!

Tertullian adorned the tale with his own racy style,†

* c. 25, 6.

† De Resurrectione Carnis, c. 13.

attempting to prove it by a text of Scripture;* and Eusebius, Lactantius, Ambrose, Jerome, Cyril, all fondle the miraculous bird of the sun as the harbinger of the resurrection of the just. For it should be observed, that Clement makes the Phœnix a proof of the resurrection of the holy and faithful.

That the Greek translation of the 92nd Psalm led to this mistake is not improbable; for there we read, "The righteous shall flourish like a phœnix," which is merely the Greek name for a palm tree, which פִּינֵץ, the correspondent word in the Hebrew, certainly signifies. It has been supposed that Phœnicia derived its name from being the land of the phœnix, or palm tree. The fable of the bird has been thought to originate from the young palm tree springing up at the roots of the old one. The Greeks either mistook the name of a tree for that of a bird, or, as in other instances, chose to indulge a poetic fancy, by transferring the phœnix from the region of botany to that of ornithology. That there is no such bird naturalists are convinced; but we find a tree with the same name, and conclude that the fable was in some way made out of the fact.

Let us hear Tertullian's comment:—"If the universe but little figures out a resurrection, if what is created indicates no such thing; because each of its contents is said not so much to die, as to cease; nor is thought to be reanimated, but to be reformed; take a most full and most firm specimen of this hope. Since there is an animated thing subject both to life and to death. I speak of that peculiar bird of the east, famous for its singularity, monstrous for its posterity, willingly making its own funeral, renovates by a natal end (or death); departing and succeeding again; a phœnix, where already there was none (is) again itself, where just now it was not; another and the same. What more express and significant for this cause?

* Psalm xcii.

or for what other thing is there such a document, or proof? God, also, in his Scriptures, speaks, 'For he shall flourish,' says he, 'as a phoenix,' that is, from death, from the funeral (pile); that you may believe, that from fires, also, the substance of the body can be reclaimed. The Lord has pronounced us better than many sparrows. That is no great thing, if we are not also better than phoenixes. But shall men perish once (for all), while the birds of Arabia are secure of a resurrection?"*

Here all the arrogant vehemence, obscure brevity, and forced figures of the African father are employed to give to a blunder the effect of truth. For he was deceived by the ambiguity of the word phoenix, in the Alexandrine version of the Psalm, and while botanists† know that it is the Greek name for a palm tree,‡ and thus a proper translation for the Hebrew word, corresponding with the other half of the verse, "He shall grow like a cedar;" Tertullian,§ perhaps, misled by Clement, who was misled by heathen poets or priests, thought of nothing but a fabulous bird. From one who is vaunted as a successor to the apostles, down to the most powerful of the Latin fathers, who lived to the middle of the third century, this fable was propagated among Christians and supposed to be proved from holy writ; and we are now told to regard these fathers as the authoritative interpreters of Scripture!

The prevailing ignorance of the Hebrew, not only led to a false reliance on the Greek where it was wrong, but to mistakes concerning its meaning where it was right. What stumbling-blocks were laid in the way of the heathen by these fathers! When Palæphatus wrote on incredible

* De Resur. Carn. c. 13.

† The principal genera of the family palmæ are cocos, phoenix, chamaerops, &c. Phoenix dactilifera is the systematic name of the date tree.

‡ Odyssey, ζ.

§ It is difficult to conceive how a reader of the Greek Testament could have fallen into this mistake. Would Tertullian have rendered John xii. 13, *βαῖα τῶν φοινίκων*, branches of Phoenixes?

things, unriddling many of the current fables, how justly might he have placed the phoenix in his catalogue, and, by a proper application of the name, changed the bird into a tree. But the fathers had fathered the fable upon the Scriptures, and reason would have been pronounced a heretic. How much stronger was the church when it had no other argumentation on the resurrection, than that of the apostle in the fifteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Corinthians! How was she weakened and degraded by Clement, the best of the fathers, as well as by all those who followed him as an oracle!

The manner in which this precious morsel of patristic theology was dropped, leaving the favourite Phoenix of the fathers to be pecked at as a speckled bird, without a single hand being lifted up, among all the sons, to defend it, is at once most instructive and amusing. The temple of the sun, at Heliopolis, Christians destroyed without any kind, commiserating thought, that the new Phoenix would have no altar whereon to deposit its parent's bones. One five hundred years after another returned and brought no miraculous bird. The letter of Clement was lost—perhaps put out of the way; Tertullian, the godfather of the half heathen, half Christian prodigy, was denounced as a Montanist; the other favourers of the fable were passed by in silence; and now we are coolly asked, if it is wonderful that the originator of the story should partake of the folly of his times? What man of sense would wonder at it? The only wonder is, that men pretending to sense should concede to these fathers an authority which they so manifestly cannot claim.

Pursuing the doctrine of the resurrection, as first taught by Clement, we have been led into a slight anachronism, and must now go back to Ignatius. His vague tropes and doubtful allusions to the future state prove no more than that *he* expected to be perfected, immediately on his departure from the body; but it may be said, he was a

martyr, and the baptism of blood was supposed to confer the peculiar privilege of exemption from the pains of purgatory. Whether that which now calls itself the church says no masses for the repose of the souls of those who die as martyrs to their faith, may be expected to be unknown to such as say, "O my soul! come not thou into their secret."

We pass on, therefore, to Justin, who informs Antoninus, that "hell is the place where they shall be punished who have lived unjustly, and have not believed that those things will occur which God has taught by Jesus Christ.* For his second coming shall be from heaven, in glory, with his angelic host, when he shall raise the bodies of all men, and clothe with immortality the bodies of the worthy, and send those of the unjust in eternal pain into everlasting fire with the demons. We are taught, that those only are immortalized who pass their life near to God; but those who live unjustly are punished in eternal fire."† Here is certainly no hint of a third state, temporary purgatorial fire for *wicked Christians*, which the early fathers thought a solecism; but as it may be observed, that the reference is to Christ's second coming, we cannot learn, except from Justin's silence, the doctrine of his time concerning the state of Christians immediately after death.

Of the hell of which they speak, we may judge by the words of Justin: "Nor do I affirm that all souls die; but those of the pious remain in some better place, and the unjust and wicked in a worse, expecting the time of judgment."‡

Tertullian adds, "Eleazar," meaning Lazarus, "is placed in hell, apud inferos, a refreshment in the bosom of Abraham; on the other hand, Dives is placed in the torment of fire."§

* Apol. i. 30, Paris, 66.

† Dial. Paris, 223.

+ Ibid. 76, Paris, 87.

§ De Idolat. c. 12.

Here is occasion for pause and reflection, with little satisfaction to him who flees from the Scriptures to the fathers; for these pretend to know nothing but what they supposed they had learned from the divine writings. Where Scripture has left us in the dark, and "men speak not according to that word; they have no light in them." Translating the word Hades, according to its etymology and its use among the Greeks, it is rendered an invisible place, which was all that Homer intended, when he said, the souls of his brave heroes were hurried, by the Trojan war, into Hades, where he exhibits them celebrating games in Elysian fields. The fathers, therefore, condemn the language of our translation, and of the article in what is falsely called the Apostles' Creed, which says, "Christ descended into hell;" misleading the vulgar by an English word, which *now* conveys an idea not contained in the original. This is so well known as to require no argument; but so little regarded as to demand repeated protest.

But, in this Hades, where Lazarus found a place of refreshment, but Dives the torment of fire, all souls remain, expecting the resurrection at the day of judgment; if the fathers are to be believed. What are we to think, then, of Tetzels box, which, rattling with the money paid for masses, became a holiday bell, ringing souls out of purgatory, and into the presence of God, ages before the resurrection? It surely was, however, rich in money, empty of charity, a mere "sounding brass, and tinkling cymbal." Either the fathers were false teachers, or the church that boasts of them has been taking money for selling smoke; for after all that has been paid for mortuary masses, the souls, both of the righteous and the wicked, are just where they were, in Hades, waiting for the resurrection at the judgment day.

Clement of Alexandria says, that, "Not only the Lord preached the gospel to those in Hades, τοῖς ἐν ᾍδου; but the *apostles* preached there to those Gentiles that were for

conversion.”* In support of which he puts this strange question: “If the Lord, when in the flesh, preached that men might not be unjustly condemned, why should he not preach, for the same end, to those who had departed before his coming?” If we can divine his meaning, it was this: That men were so beset by demons, and other sinful hinderances to their salvation, that it would not have been just to leave them under condemnation, without affording them the help that was administered by the mission and ministry of Christ. Why, then, should not such aid be granted to those who died before his coming? This makes the advent of Christ, not a pure grace to the unworthy, but a just compensation for injury that would otherwise have been done to those, who were to be pitied rather than blamed. The thought does not seem to have occurred to this philosopher, that Christ’s mission extended to but one country as well as one age.

But the doctrine of recovery from Hades, or hell, seems taught here, though unfortunately for the advocates of purgatory, it is not recovery for Christians who have died in venial sins, but for those who were no Christians at all. What Clement means by “those Gentiles who were for conversion,” it may not be possible to ascertain; but among conjectures, our choice lies between Pelagianism and Augustinianism. For the former it may be pleaded, that the whole passage supposes there were some heathens, before the coming of Christ, so good that it would be unjust to condemn them; to which it may be answered, that the church condemned this Pelagian notion, and, therefore, Clement, an orthodox father, could not have been a Pelagian. Bowing to this inevitable conclusion, we turn to the remaining hypothesis, that Clement intended, those Gentiles that were chosen or predestined “for salvation.” This may be abundantly sustained by his own language concerning the church, as consisting of

* Strom. vi. 462.

the "elect, who were predestinated according to the purpose of God's will."

PART II.—*Of Antichrist.*

As Protestants have been mistaken when they accused Rome of originating the corruption of doctrine; so Romanists have erred egregiously in charging their opponents with inventing that interpretation of the Apocalypse which points to Rome as the seat of Antichrist; for this is derived from the fathers.

Paul assured the mistaken Thessalonians, that the day of the Lord would not come till there should be a falling away; and the beloved disciple, John, reminded Christians, that they had heard Antichrist should come. That these warnings had not escaped the notice of the early church, numerous quotations will show. It may not be uninteresting, however, previously to observe, that the Jews have a notion, perhaps derived from Christians, of some wicked power, or person, that shall arise. The Chaldee paraphrast on the words of Isaiah,* "With the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked," has this comment: "Shall slay the wicked Armilus," which some say means "Romulus," or "that wicked Roman;" while others interpret it to signify an enemy who is yet to come and kill Messiah, Ben Joseph, the sufferer; after which, Messiah, Ben David, or the conqueror, will appear and destroy Antichrist.

Justin Martyr, in his Dialogue with Trypho, the Jew, says, "The man of blasphemy, who shall speak daring things against the Most High, is already at the doors,"† which he affirms "Daniel foretold; but you Jews, not knowing how long he is detained, think differently." Justin says nearly the same thing again: "Christ's second coming shall be in glory, from heaven, when the man of the apostasy, speaking perverse things against the Most

* xi. 4.

† p. 250.

High, shall be daring against us Christians.”* Here it should be noticed, that Antichrist is called the man of the apostasy, one that has professed the Christian religion and departed from it in some way ; and that he is said to be at the doors, which, alas ! was more true than Justin himself was aware ; for his own writings contain some of the germs of the apostasy ; though in the sense which he intended, time has proved that the martyr was no prophet.

He who, doubtless, derived his opinions on this subject from others, became an oracle to his successors, and, among the rest, to Irenæus, who enlarges on the coming of Antichrist. The twenty-fifth chapter of the fifth book against heresies is entitled, “The fraud, pride, and tyrannical reign of Antichrist, as they are described by Daniel and Paul.” “But, not only by those things that are said, but also by those that will be under Antichrist, it is shown that, being an apostate and a robber, he wishes to be adored as a god ; and, while he is a servant, he wishes to be proclaimed a king. For he, taking all the power of the devil, shall come, not as a just king, nor as a legitimate one, in subjection to God ; but impious, and unjust, and without law, as an apostate and iniquitous, and a homicide ; as a robber, uniting in himself diabolical apostasy. A fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom in the earth, which shall be eminent above other kingdoms, and it shall devour all the earth, and tread it down, &c. Of which, again, the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonians : ‘Then shall be revealed that wicked one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay by the spirit of his mouth, and destroy by the presence of his coming, whose coming is according to the operation of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all the seduction of malice, to those who perish,’ &c. The Lord says, ‘I come in my Father’s name, and ye will not receive me ; if another

shall come in his own name, him ye will receive ;' calling Antichrist another ; for he is alien from the Lord ; and he is the unjust judge mentioned by the Lord, to whom fled the widow that forgot God, that is, the earthly Jerusalem, to be avenged of her enemy, which, also, he shall do in the time of his reign ; he shall transfer the kingdom to her, and shall sit in the temple of God, seducing those who worship him, as though he himself were Christ. Wherefore, Daniel says, again, 'And the holy shall be desolated, and sin was given for a sacrifice, and righteousness was cast out in the earth, and he wrought and prospered.' And the angel Gabriel, explaining his vision, said this, 'And, in the end of their kingdom there shall rise a prince of very wicked countenance, and understanding questions, and his power is mighty and wonderful, and he shall corrupt and exterminate the mighty, and the holy people, and the daily sacrifice. Deceit shall be regulated by his hand ; in his heart he shall be exalted ; and by deceit he shall scatter many ; and he shall stand to the perdition of many ; and, with one hand, he shall crush.' Then he signifies the time of his tyranny ; at what time the saints are put to flight, who offer a pure sacrifice to God. And in the midst of the week, he says, 'shall be taken away the sacrifice and the libation.' But the half of the week are three years and six months."

Though we had extracted more, we have, perhaps, given enough of this father's opinion of Antichrist, in which the student of Scripture will see a strange confusion of texts, some of which have nothing to do with the subject ; as, for instance, the widow and the unjust judge. But the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, also, is confounded with that of the coming of Antichrist, so as to throw confusion over the whole. The same effect is produced by introducing the prediction of the persecution of the Jews, by the Syrian kings, as if Antiochus, who had already passed off the stage, was the Antichrist to come.

Who can respect such interpreters of Scripture? The best apology that can be devised is, that they intentionally mystified what they deemed it unsafe to make plain—that Antichrist would arise at Rome; for this, not being understood, would have been deemed treason against the empire. Let the reader, however, not fail to notice, that Irenæus, the pupil of Polycarp, professes not to interpret these mysteries by the aid of tradition from the apostles, but at the outset appeals to the written word.

But if Irenæus wearies us with the repetition of the same things, and perplexes us by confounding prophecies of very different events, he entertains us with a disquisition on the number of the beast, six hundred and sixty-six,* which is the only thing that he seems to commend, as “coming to him from those who saw the face of John, the writer of the Revelation.” “There are many names found to have this number. We do not, therefore, make it a question whose name it shall be, for want of names having the number, but on account of the fear of God, and jealousy for the truth. For *Euanthus* has the number for which we are inquiring; but we affirm not concerning that. But the name *Lateinos*, also, has the number six hundred and sixty-six; and it is very likely, since the last kingdom has this word. For they are Latins who now

* Newton, defending the orthography of Irenæus, because the long i of the Latins was expressed in Greek by *ei*, observes that the name must be supposed to be written either in Greek or Hebrew; and that, by an unparalleled coincidence, both these languages contain the same number in words signifying the same thing.

A	.	.	30
A	.	.	1
T	.	.	300
E	.	.	5
I	.	.	10
N	.	.	50
O	.	.	70
Σ	.	.	200
<hr/>			
Latinos	.	.	666

ר	.	.	200
ו	.	.	6
כ	.	.	40
י	.	.	10
ה	.	.	10
ה	.	.	400
<hr/>			
Romiith	.	.	666

reign ; but not in this will we glory.”* It is amusing to see how silently the Romanist editor passes over this astounding discovery of Irenæus, that the Latins wear the number or the name of Antichrist ; and how the powers of legerdemain are taxed to find the same number in Martin Luther, which is deemed near enough to prove that Luther was intended. Those who boast of the church of the fathers make no scruple of passing by their interpretations with contemptuous disregard, to introduce a modern name that will better serve *their* church. Not the Protestants, however, but the early fathers, first found Antichrist among the Latins, in the Roman empire, with which Irenæus was so connected that he wisely said, “We will not glory in this.” Let it not be forgotten that he who discovered the number of the name of Antichrist where he could not glory in it, professed in his volume to give the doctrine of the church against the private opinion of heretics, and to have derived information from those who saw the face of John, who could scarcely have been supposed, however, to have given a verbal hint of the name ; for that must have precluded all further inquiry.

Tertullian contends that “Babylon, in our John, *i. e.*, in the Apocalypse, is a figure of the Roman city, as being great, proud of empire, and warring against the saints of God.”†

That the Roman empire was “he that letteth and will let till he be taken out of the way,” may be thought a contradiction to this opinion. But while other fathers also declared they prayed for the continuance of the Roman empire ; because, on its fall, Antichrist would come ; parading this, probably, as a shield against accusations of treasonable doctrines ; there is really no discrepancy

* Lib. v. c. 30.

† Sic et Babylon etiam apud Joannem nostrum Romanæ urbis figura est, proinde magnæ et regno superbæ et sanctorum Dei debellatricis. Advers. Marc. lib. iii. c. 13.

between the two opinions. For they understood the Scriptures to teach that when the *empire* should be broken up, ten kings would share the dominion, and Antichrist would rise among them, and be the Nebuchadnezzar who would make Rome his Babylon. Lateinos, therefore, would be the name that contained the number 666; "the Latin tongue being preserved, though the dynasty was changed." Irenæus, indeed, makes Jerusalem the seat of Antichrist. but is there no reason to suspect that this interpretation was dictated by his fear of being charged with treason against the Roman empire, and that, like the Jews, who mean Rome when they speak of Edom, he published merely the exoteric doctrine, and explained the esoteric to the initiated in private? Of this, the timid, equivocal manner in which he speaks of Lateinos affords some proof; as also the reason he gives for "*questioning* the name on account of the fear of God, and jealousy for the truth." Irenæus knew that the temple at Jerusalem was no longer in existence, and if he had in view the rebuilding of it, we shall shortly see that this would be, not for Antichrist, but the millennial reign of the saints. It is scarcely doubtful, therefore, that the temple in which Antichrist was to sit was said by way of a blind to be at Jerusalem, when Rome was intended, which it was not thought prudent to avow. As Augustine assures us that the Apostle Paul was supposed to write doubtfully, lest he should incur the reproach of wishing ill to the Roman empire, we cannot wonder that the fathers used enigmas.

But whatever may be thought of this Protestant opinion of Antichrist, of its invention, if a merit, we are unworthy; if a crime, we are innocent. It belongs not to us, but to the fathers. They first taught that Rome was Babylon; they saw in the civil rulers the hinderance to the rise of the man of sin; they taught that the breaking up of the empire into ten kingdoms was the signal for Antichrist to appear in the midst of them; they saw the

number of the beast in Lateinos, ere yet Latin had been made the language of religion to all nations, though to not one is it intelligible. If Rome, seeing her own likeness here, is indignant, and exclaims, "In so saying thou condemnest us;" let her cite, not us, but the fathers to the tribunal of the inquisition, for she calls the dead to answer for their deeds. As for us, all our crime consists in this, that, for once, at least, we consent to the fathers. Is this the unpardonable sin for which no absolution can be obtained at Rome?

We cannot, however, dismiss this subject without observing, that, if antiquity and perpetuity are declared essential to prove any doctrine true, these marks are indelibly fixed on the dogma that Antichrist is to be found at Rome; for as we have seen its antiquity, so its perpetuity can be traced through every period till it become the avowed doctrine of Protestants, who hold it to this day.

PART III.—*The Millennium.*

IF the Jews derived their expectation of an approaching iniquitous domination from the Christian doctrine of Antichrist, the fathers, in their turn, give strong reason to suspect that they borrowed much of their theory of the Millennium from the Jewish Rabbis. It was the tradition of the house of Eli, who lived about two hundred years before Christ, that "As, out of seven years, every seventh is the year of remission; so, out of the seven years of the world, the seventh millenary shall be the millenary of remission, that God alone may be exalted in that day." Justin, therefore, represents Trypho, the Jew, as expressing no surprise at the notion of a Millennium; though he disputed, rather sarcastically, the Christian claim to the new Jerusalem, which he thought belonged to "those of his nation, and to the proselytes who joined them, before Christ's coming."

Some may say, if the Christians borrowed from the

Jews, whose chronology makes the world to be now only about 5400 years old, how could the fathers have supposed the seven thousandth year to be at hand, even in their days? We reply, "Apart from the suspicion that the Jews have since tampered with the chronology, in order to diminish the apparent delay of Messiah's appearance, the Christians adopted their own chronology, which, as we have seen, exceeded the truth, no less than that of the Jews falls short. Though we find in Justin Martyr, first, the doctrine of the millennial reign of Christ, we cannot doubt that he derived it from his contemporaries and predecessors, and spoke the language of many, perhaps most Christians in his day. He has left on record the following statement: 'You, having heard that we expect a kingdom, rashly conclude (O Romans) that we speak of a human kingdom, while we are speaking of that which is with God; as may be known from those who are examined by you; since they confess themselves Christians, aware that death is the penalty. For, if we expect a human kingdom, we should deny our faith, that we might not be slain, and should endeavour to lurk in secret (reserving ourselves) that we might obtain what we expect.'"*

"A short time is allowed you (Jews) for coming to us. If Christ should come first, in vain will you repent." Trypho says, "Tell me truly; do you confess that this place, Jerusalem, is to be rebuilt; and do you expect your people to be gathered (there), and to be happy with Christ, together with the patriarchs and prophets, and those of our nation, or the proselytes, who were before your Christ's coming?"† Justin: "I have already confessed to you that I, indeed, and many others, think so, as you well know. But I have intimated to you, that many, on the other hand, even of those Christians that are of pure and pious sentiments, do not acknowledge this. For I have also shown you that there are many called Christians that

* Apol. i. 53.

† Dialog. p. 306.

are atheists and heretics. But I, and if there are any Christians right-minded* in all things, do know there is to be a resurrection even of the flesh, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, rebuilt, and adorned, and enlarged, as the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others confess. So Isaiah spoke of the thousand years.†

“For according to the days of the tree of life shall be the days of my people, and the work of their labour shall be multiplied. For as it was said to Adam, ‘In the day that thou eatest of the tree, thou shalt die;’ we know he did not complete a thousand years. We understand what is said: ‘The day of the Lord as a thousand years,’ refers to this. And since there was with us a certain man named John, one of the apostles of Christ, he, in the revelation made to him, prophesied that those who believed in our Christ should pass a thousand years in Jerusalem, and after this there shall be the universal and eternal resurrection and judgment of all together. Which also our Lord said, ‘They shall neither marry, nor be given in marriage, but shall be equal to the angels, being children of the God of the resurrection.’”‡

Whether there will be a Millennium, a thousand years of triumph to religion, or all things will go on as hitherto, until the last judgment; and whether the Millennium, if proved, will be of a more literal or more spiritual kind, are not questions to be discussed in these pages; but it is certain, that from Justin no theory can derive proof. For though the traditionists may plead that so early a writer proves the general doctrine to have come down from the apostles, he contradicts that notion, and shows that in his time the church derived its Millennium from

* The extent to which our extracts have run, though contracted from the original design, has prevented us from inserting a note intended to justify our rejection of the criticism of Mede and Tillotson, who insert a negative in the passage from Justin.

† Isaiah lxx.

‡ Dial. 306, 308.

the interpretation of texts. But not one of those that he adduces furnishes any real proof. If Justin is a specimen of the early commentators on Scripture, what imbecility, or rather what madness, is it to make them authorities! They who are guilty of such conduct offer small atonement by throwing down the idol which they had set up, some of them abandoning altogether the Millennium; while they who most fondly cling to it scruple not to exchange Justin's Millennium for one of their own. Time has, indeed, proved that what he promised or threatened to the *Romans* was the child of his fancy; and the city, which he taught the Christians to expect, modern millenarians claim for the Jews, and, according to some, in their unconverted state. If, then, wisdom was not confined to Justin and his contemporaries, it is sufficiently clear that neither was folly.

Irenæus, after some puerile comments, derived from a false translation, proceeds thus: "These are in the times of the kingdom, on the seventh day, which is sanctified," meaning the seven thousandth year. "Therefore, the benediction predicted, without contradiction, pertains to the times of the kingdom, when the just, rising from the dead, shall reign; when, also, the creature, renovated and liberated, shall fructify abundance of food, by the dew of heaven and the fertility of the earth. The days shall come in which vines shall grow, each having ten thousand branches, and in one branch, ten thousand shoots; and in every shoot, ten thousand bunches; and in every bunch, ten thousand grapes; and every grape, expressed, will yield twenty-five metretas, or firkins of wine. And when any of the saints shall lay hold of a bunch, another will cry out, 'I am a better bunch; take me, and, by me, bless the Lord.'" Of the grain, also, a similar story is told, which it would be a waste of time to repeat.

"These things, Papias, an old man, a companion of Polycarp, testifies, by the Scripture, in the fourth of his

books. These things are credible to believers." Irenæus attempts to prove them by the prophecy of Isaiah concerning "the lion lying down with the lamb."

He blames those who attempt to allegorize this; for fables must be taken literally; facts only are to be turned into allegories. He quotes the apocryphal Baruch in support of his theory. "A new Jerusalem shall come down out of heaven, of which that in Palestine was an image. Then, all the renovated shall dwell in the city of God, not allegorically, as we have shown."*

We have not given the whole of this long and prosing fable, which was not the offspring of the author's own imagination, but came to him by tradition, not from the apostles, but from apocryphal writers, chiefly the fictitious Barnabas. But when Irenæus contended for the literal meaning of his millennial vine, did he include the speaking bunches of grapes that yield a firkin each? They were not water drinkers who revelled in these bacchanalian fancies; but were certainly open to the censure that Middleton is blamed for flinging upon Justin, as teaching a Millennium of sensual delights. It is unquestionable, that, with all the ultra-angelic spirituality of these fathers, and all their compulsory fasting, they hoped to make up for it in the new Jerusalem, as all pretences to soar above the divine rule end in sinking far below.

Tertullian derived from the same sources the notion which suited and still more inflamed his already heated brain. After referring to some supposed vision, he says, "It is just and worthy of God, that his servants should there exult, where they have been afflicted for his name's sake. This is the reason of the celestial kingdom, after whose thousand years, within which age the resurrection of the saints is included, according to the merits of those that rise earlier, or later, then also the destruction of the world, and the conflagration of the judgment being

* Lib. v. c. 33, 4, 5.

effected, we, changed in a moment into angelic substance by that superinducement of incorruption, shall be transferred to the celestial kingdom.”* He then proceeds to adduce proofs, which, being no better than those of Justin, are omitted, as unworthy of notice.

Eusebius, in the conclusion of his third book, says of Papias, “The same writer exhibits other things, as coming to him from unwritten tradition, certain strange parables and instructions of the Saviour, and fabulous things. In which, also, he says, ‘There will be a certain Millennium. after the resurrection of the dead, the kingdom of Christ coming bodily upon the earth;’ which also I think he conceived of, in consequence of not perceiving that the apostolic narratives were spoken mystically, by examples, or figures taken from earthly things. For he had very little mind, as appears from his writings. But he became the occasion of the like opinion to most of the ecclesiastical writers after him, adducing the antiquity of the man; as, *e. g.*, Irenæus, and if there is any other who thinks the same.” Here it is observable, that unwritten traditions are treated with contempt, and their great collector pronounced a simpleton. Those who derived from him the doctrine of the Millennium, on account of his high antiquity, are not spared, even though Irenæus is among them; and it is said to be doubtful, whether any other agreed with Papias, when Eusebius wrote. For the church had then abandoned the fathers on this point; so that the historian was not giving his own private opinion; but the Catholic doctrine, that the Millennium of Papias, Irenæus, Justin, Tertullian, and others, was a fable, derived from ignorance of the true meaning of apostolic words.

Why was this most ancient and general, not to say universal, tradition, as completely abandoned as it had been fondly cherished? Persecution, which always reminded the Christians of Antichrist, either in the form of Nero,

* Adv. Marc. lib. iii. c. 24.

the first persecutor, or of some cruel imitator, seems also to have given a charm to the millennial paradise, which was expected to follow ; but every relief from persecution, and especially the conversion of Constantine, broke the spell which bound them to the visions of Papias. They at last found the new Jerusalem at Constantinople, and said, "Why should we seek any other?" But whatever may have been the cause, there is much instruction in the fact. At this distance of time, a superstitious reverence is claimed for the fathers, because that which is unknown is supposed to be magnificent ; but they who knew them better, took the liberty to abandon their most favoured theory as a Jewish fable.

Another and a very different reason has, indeed, been assigned for the abandonment of the millennial doctrine. For Eusebius, who wrote when Christianity began "to lift her mitred head in courts and senates," informs us, that "Cerinthus, also, by revelations, (as if written by some great apostle,) brought to us certain monstrous things, feigning them to have been revealed unto him by angels. That the kingdom of Christ, after the resurrection, should become earthly ; that, in Jerusalem, our flesh again should serve lusts and pleasures. And being an enemy to the Word of God, and wishing to deceive, he said there would be the term of a millenary marriage feast."* Where lies the difference between Cerinthus the heretic, and Irenæus the orthodox father? It is scarcely possible to separate the Millennium of the latter from sensual indulgences ; and even though *he* should have accomplished the difficult task, we cannot wonder that others of inferior spirituality failed. We should have deemed it a pious duty to apologize for the Lyonesse hammer of the heretics, by pleading that his talkative grapes, which yielded each one twenty-five firkins of wine, were an allegory, had he not forbidden us. How, then

* Lib. iii. c. 23, vii. c. 25.

are we to distinguish between his Millennium and that of Cerinthus?

But when we are told, that, because heretics abused the doctrine of the new Jerusalem, the church agreed to drop it; we ask, "Are not, then, heretics made the teachers of the church by a left-handed process? They have only to take up our doctrines and pervert them, in order to banish them from our pulpits. Are they not thus made the real dictators in theology? For what can they not adopt, and pervert, and so expunge from our creed? If the new Jerusalem was a revealed truth when it was a prevailing opinion, could it be falsified by any perversion? But if, on the other hand, the abuse of it, by the heretics, opened the eyes of the church to its real character, and thus procured its banishment, what are we to think of Justin, who made this doctrine the very acme of orthodoxy, the proof of being 'right-minded in all things?'"

False, however, was the pretence set up for abandoning the millenarianism of Justin, Irenæus, and Tertullian. Cerinthus was one of the earliest heretics; and if his perversion of truth ever produced any modification of the orthodox creed, it should have thus operated before the time when those advocates for the new Jerusalem commended her to the faith and hope of the church.

But Eusebius enlarges on the extinction of what was at first an orthodox tradition, and at last a condemned heresy: "Nepos, an Egyptian bishop, taught that the promises of God were to be understood in a Jewish manner; that, after the resurrection, we should lead on earth a life of corporal pleasures a thousand years. To justify this out of the Revelation of John, he wrote a book. Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, writing against him, commends Nepos for studying the Scriptures, and says, "When I was in the Arsenoitan district, where the doctrine formerly sprang up, I called together the elders and doctors, and they brought forth the book; and from morning to night,

for three whole days, we discussed these things." He praises their intelligence and moderation, and says they received conviction; and at length the ringleader of this doctrine, Coracion, confessed his error, and promised never to mention or teach it again; for he was sufficiently convinced by the opposite arguments.

Dionysius is led, by this controversy, to discuss the authenticity of the Revelation, which, he says, some ascribed to Cerinthus, who employed the name of John, to sanction his own sensual errors. The bishop, however, admits that it was written by a holy man,* under a divine influence; but argues against the opinion that the writer was the Apostle John, and inclines to the supposition that it was another John, called the elder. Dionysius, confessing himself unable to discover the meaning of the book, wisely ascribes this to his own ignorance; though he was the most celebrated bishop of the latter part of the third century, and the revered instructor of the Christian world.†

It is also worthy of special observation that the communion which most proudly boasts of her antiquity and perpetuity, here, also, departs from an opinion that claims the fathers, if not the apostles, as its authors; for in addition to denying the patristic doctrine, that Rome was Babylon, she has silently dropped all mention of a Millennium, of which the fathers say so much. It was, indeed, not to be expected that the Revelation should be a favourite study in the soi-disant holy city; but the very cautious avoidance of that theme excites suspicions that she sees herself, or at least cannot wonder that others see her, in that prophetic glass. Could the fathers of the first three hundred years, with all their ascetic rigour, have

* This invalidates the Apology which the good Tillemont would make for Dionysius, by supposing that it was not the canonical Apocalypse, but some heretical revelation of Cerinthus which the bishop condemned.

† Eus. Hist. Ecc. lib. vii. c. 24.

foreseen what the church of Rome, with her popes, exhibited of pride, impurity, and cruelty, would they not have exclaimed, "Behold the predicted apostasy, which arose out of the breaking up of the empire into ten kingdoms, still retaining the Latin tongue, the name contained in the mystic number, 666; Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, drunk with the blood of the saints"?

LECTURE VII.

THE CAUSES OF THE PECULIAR CHARACTERISTICS OF EARLY THEOLOGY.

THE reflecting reader must frequently have asked, how came so much error to be early mingled with Christian truth, and whence arose that false sanctity and real impurity which debased the character of our religion? To this we reply, that the disadvantages of the fathers were necessarily great; the advantages they possessed were, however magnified, few and small; they were seriously and even culpably defective in biblical science; exposed to injurious alternations of adversity and prosperity; they engaged in unprofitable controversies with heretics; and lived near the dawn of the predicted apostasy, which the Scriptures assign to the apostolic times.

PART I.—*The Disadvantages of the Fathers were naturally and almost necessarily great.*

THE earliest Christians were, of course, proselytes from another religion; and till a second generation arose, the church could not contain those who “from childhood had known those Holy Scriptures which are able to make us wise to salvation.” Can we, without profanely undervaluing a Christian education, deny the disadvantages of an age that possessed few who enjoyed a blessing, for which scarcely anything but a miracle can make compensation? The Jewish and heathen religions then

divided the world; and though the Jews had escaped the abominations of idols, Judaism had been corrupted by the pride of Pharisaism and the fables of the Rabbis, with a very large admixture of oriental theosophism and the sceptical philosophy which the writings of Josephus betray. The Talmud is so replete with folly and filth, that a Jewish education enfeebles, distorts, and pollutes the mind, till even a sincere convert to Christianity scarcely ever obtains a complete victory over the rabbinical Jew. The apostles rose, by an extraordinary inspiration, above the level of their age, and many of their first converts were endued with special gifts as well as grace; but the Acts of the Apostles and the subsequent history of the church at Jerusalem show how fondly the Jews doated on "that which is abolished."

But who that has been educated by Christians can form any adequate conception of the mind of a *heathen*, devoted from his infancy to lewd and horrid idols? Those who are engaged in the work of Christian missions learn, to their sorrow, that little more is to be expected from the mass of their converts, stunted and polluted as they have been by idolatry, than sincerity and zeal; so that a new generation must arise to give full development to the Christian character. But even the children of converts suffer severely from having had parents who once were heathens.

The most celebrated fathers were originally pagans, and had spent a great part of their life bewildered by the various schools of philosophy, which they had entered in search of truth. Such, by his own confession, was Justin. To suppose that he, immediately on his conversion to Christianity, completely surmounted all the defects of his heathen education, is sheer fanaticism. His naturally vigorous mind crouches under the load of fables and false philosophy which he had not been able to throw off; and

the purifying, ennobling influence of Christianity is thus deprived of half its force.

When pagan Rome asked, "Why, if your God is supreme, does he not deliver you from persecution ;" what is Justin's reply ? "When God made the world he put the earth under angels, who fell in love with women that bare to them dæmons, who are the persecutors of the just." What could the philosophical Antoninus think of such an answer ? How can we avoid the conclusion that it was dictated by the old pagan elements of Justin's mind, rather than by the principles of his new religion ? But Justin was not alone. Clement of Alexandria was steeped to the eyes in heathen lore. His *Stromata*, which, perhaps, he commenced when a heathen, are a guide to the Pantheon, or Pandemonium rather, which he attempts to sanctify by the assertion that the Greek philosophy was a preparation for Christ, in spite of the apostle's counter-declaration.

When, however, we speak of the fathers as spoiled by philosophy and science, we must add, with Paul, "falsely so called." For it was not the true philosophy, the study of God's works, which now nobly occupies the minds of the scientific, and which unfolds "the invisible things of God by the things that are made ;" but the dreams of Plato, and the speculations of other schools, that occupied the fathers. They gloried in forming, from the Scriptures and the fragments of various sects, the Eclectic philosophy. Christianity, therefore, was compelled, not to accommodate itself to the works of nature, or even to an imperfect and distorted theory of creation, but to amalgamate with the reveries of Plato, which are now regarded by true philosophy as mere poetry.

As soon as any one of these philosophers, falsely so called, embraced Christianity, he was caught at as a prize ; and before he was a thorough Christian, was made a minister, or a tutor, of the rising race, the hope of the church. The

philosopher's cloak gave Justin a pernicious prominence ; and Tatian, who caught his mantle, proved a heretic. Synesius, in a later age, was, in defiance of his own better judgment, made a bishop ; because he had been a platonic philosopher and an elegant Greek poet.

The error was discovered after the mischief had been done and could not be undone. Tertullian ascribes the heresies of his day to philosophy. Nor were there wanting others to tell the later Clement, "We prefer faith to philosophy."* Eusebius thus writes of the followers of Artemon: "It was said, if any reasoned with them out of Scripture, they asked, whether it was a conjunct, or discrete, simple syllogism. Laying aside Scripture, they practise geometry. Euclid laboriously measures the earth. Aristotle and Theophrastus are highly esteemed;"† though Tertullian censures the Stagyrite, who became, at last, an oracle in the church.

It is, we grant, far easier for us, educated among Christians, and instructed by the history of the church, to see; and censure, and deplore the paganizing of Christianity, than it could have been for the authors of the mischief to anticipate the consequences of their devious course. Unhappily, also, we are furnished with another apology for them, in the conduct of those moderns who ought to have learned wisdom from the folly of the ancients. For, if, after the mischievous effects of the error have been betrayed, these fathers are still exhibited as idols, must we not turn our severest reproofs from them to their worshippers? It was the misfortune of the fathers that time had not unrolled to them the melancholy tale which he has told us ; it is the crime of the sons that they will not read and learn. Much of the mischief that was doing in one part of the church was hidden from another, when councils were provincial, not œcumenic, or universal ; but while *we* may profit by the history of all countries, and all ages,

* Strom. i. 213, 230.

† Euseb. lib. v. c. 28.

many are as ignorant from choice, as the fathers were by the misfortunes of their birth and the inexperience of their times.

This censure falls where it may surprise some, as a singular display of the ingenuity of iniquity. For the philosophizing spirit of the present day is gravely censured by a certain class of writers, who contend, with great reason, that revealed religion is not, like philosophy, open to new discoveries, since it comes from the perfect mind of the infallible One, who "sees the end from the beginning." But, strange to tell, this argumentation is not employed to send men to the word of the Lord, which endureth for ever, but to the fathers. Now, to say nothing of the high improbability that men, who spent a great part of their lives in heathen darkness, should, all at once, become the best expositors of Scripture; we have the most positive proofs that the fathers were deeply implicated in the guilt of philosophizing upon religion, which their admirers so severely condemn. But the ancient philosophy was exactly that which the Scriptures brand as "falsely so called;" while that which obtains in the present day is, at least professedly, what the Scriptures commend, when they say, "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all those that have pleasure therein." As God cannot contradict himself, his works can never be at variance with his word; and if it be said, "But our notions of his works are not the works themselves," we reply, "True; but the experimental philosophy of the present day is the only means of bringing us to a real acquaintance with our Maker's works, while the platonism of the fathers could do nothing but bewilder and mislead."

PART II.—*The Advantages possessed by the Fathers, however magnified by some, were few and small.*

WE know, indeed, that it is said, "They lived near the times of the apostles, and heard either them or those that

conversed with them." All this, however, is more certainly true of Simon Magus than of any father whose writings we possess. Yet, not everything that the apostles said and did, even if recorded by the most faithful witness, would be to us a safe guide. He that had seen "Peter, after eating with the Gentiles, withdraw and separate himself from them, fearing those who were of the circumcision," might have reported, and taught others to imitate, what Paul afterwards blamed as "walking not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel." And how truly might some one have said, that he heard Peter swear that he knew not the man of Nazareth !

Everything is to us as we are to it ; and not merely what is seen and heard, but who sees and hears it, determines the character of a report. That generation of Israel which immediately succeeded those who saw the great things God did for their settlement in Canaan, having become corrupt, the Maccabees, in a far later age, were better Jews than the successors of Joshua ; as our reformers were better Christians than many of the successors to apostles ; if that term can be applied to those who merely succeeded to their era of time.

The Scriptures inform us, that the earliest tradition was false, though handed down by sincere men, who saw and heard that on which it was based. "Then went the saying abroad, that that disciple should not die ; though Jesus said not to him, 'He shall not die ;'" and it is now universally believed that he is dead. It was, perhaps, nothing but the event, the death of John, that opened the eyes of Christians to the falsity of this most early and recorded tradition. The Thessalonians supposed they had learned from Paul, that the day of the Lord was at hand, which the apostle assures them was not true.

There is scarcely any tradition of a sentiment or fact, not revealed in Scripture, that comes to us in a form so definite and positive as that "Christ lived and taught on earth

till he was forty, or fifty, and declining towards old age." Thus speaks Irenæus, the disciple of Polycarp: "It is asserted by the gospel, and all the elders who in Asia met together with John, and John delivered that very thing to them. But he remained with them to the times of Trajan; and some of them not only saw John, but the other apostles, and heard these same things from them, and testify concerning this kind of narrative." Now, the advocates of tradition believe not one word of this; and yet expect us to believe traditions which have not a hundredth part of the evidence here adduced for what we know, and wonder that Irenæus did not know, to be false.

It would be easy to heap up traditions of the early fathers, once generally adopted, but so branded with folly and falsehood that they are universally abandoned; as if God designed to leave to their own counsels men whom he foresaw we should be called to idolize, that the authors of such a heresy might be without excuse. That Nero was the predicted Antichrist was the opinion of men who lived in the apostles' days, and when he was dead, they still clung to the notion, which every one now discards, as so false that it is difficult to conceive how it should in the apostolic times have been thought true.

Justin Martyr affirms, in his chief Apology, that "all those who lead a rational life, though deemed atheists, are Christians, as Socrates and Heraclitus among the Greeks, Abraham and Elias among the barbarians. What an association! Socrates and Abraham! Heraclitus and Elijah! Could this have come down from the apostle who made Abraham an example of justification by faith in Christ, and exhibited Elijah as an example of holy zeal against idols, which Socrates and the Greeks adored?"*

Clement of Alexandria declares, not only that the Greek philosophy was given to prepare men for the gospel, but also, that the worship of the heavenly bodies was to pre-

* Apol. i. 83.

serve us from the more gross adoration of images. Yet Job affirms, that the worship of the moon and stars was in his time, "an iniquity to be punished by the judges." Jehovah denounced the adoration of the host of heaven as severely as that of images.

We are sent to the fathers as expositors of Scripture by virtue of their intercourse with men under divine inspiration; but the fathers expound, not on the principle of authority, saying, "This is the true meaning; for the apostles said so," but according to what they thought rational interpretation of the import of words and sentences. Here, also, we find they had no advantages; for their reasons are often unreasonable, and as they fail to commend themselves to our judgment, divines of every communion take the liberty to differ, neither binding themselves with Clement's scarlet thread, nor aspiring to drink with Irenæus of the gigantic vine. The brightest lights of the subsequent age, Jerome, Augustine, Chrysostom, without scruple reject the interpretation of their predecessors, whenever the words of Scripture appear to demand a different exegesis. Nor is this an infrequent occurrence, for as the earliest fathers have shown a luckless propensity to dwell on the most difficult texts, where the version they employed was grossly false; so the next generations, abandoning the Septuagint, adopted more just views of the texts on which monstrous doctrines had been reared. The noble effort of Origen to improve upon the Septuagint, and the adoption of Jerome's version, cut from under the early fathers the ground on which they stood.

While he who would refer us to the fathers for a knowledge of Scripture, because they lived near to the days of the apostles, must, in all consistency, attach the highest importance to the earliest writers; these are precisely the men from whom we can gather least, especially of the New Testament; and are as truly the teachers whose comments have been abandoned, in deference to the better judgment

of their successors, who are now, both among Romanist and Protestant divines, lords of the ascendant. Nor are we always left to set up authority against authority, the later above the earlier; for of almost the whole of the New Testament we can gain from the apostolical fathers no information. When we consult them, we find that we have been sent to an oracle that is not false, but dumb.

But even when they speak, their most obsequious worshippers refuse to hear. One favourite opinion of the fathers, at least of Justin, Clement, and his disciple Origen, that Christ was, as a man, unhandsome, ill accords with the painter's tradition, though the writers quoted profess to derive even this from the Scriptures. "It is confessedly written, that the body of Jesus was disagreeable: 'We saw him, and he had no form.'"^{*} But after this notion of the disagreeable appearance of our Lord's humanity had prevailed, and Christ had been, as usual, still further caricatured by Tertullian's extravagant style, the church, in the fifth century, went off into the opposite direction; and has never returned to the ugly ideas of the ancients. Here both notions, that of unwritten tradition and of traditional interpretations of Scripture, are confuted; for if the fathers conversed with the apostles, these surely must have talked about Christ, and yet those fathers had a notion of his disagreeable appearance, which they attempt to support from Scripture, and which the whole church has renounced.

The theory of authoritative traditional interpretation has not even the charm of novelty; for it was borrowed from the synagogue. The Rabbins affirm, that, "When Moses descended from the mount, he expounded the law to Aaron and Joshua, who delivered the exposition to the seventy elders, and they repeated it to the people. This constitutes the Mishna, or second law, delivered orally from age to age,

^{*} Clement's *εψιν αἰσχροῦν* might be rendered, "an ugly face," and Origen's word is, *δυσείδες*, disagreeable, or deformed. Orig. contra Cels. lib. vi. 327. Pæd. lib. iii. c. 1.

till Rabbi Judah, the holy, committed the tradition to writing, which was at last printed, with a Latin translation, by Surenhusius, in six folio volumes.

Our Redeemer has taught us what we should think of this story, which, if it was ever of any use, should have exerted its influence in his days, to make known him of whom Moses wrote. Yet Christ never mentioned the tradition of the elders, but to censure it, for "making void the law of God." No sound mind can read the Mishna without acknowledging that it deserved to be smitten with the rod of the Redeemer's mouth; for it is a farrago of punctilios, some of them ludicrous, and some impious; while what is fatal to its pretensions pervades the whole work, the conflict of rabbi with rabbi, when they are professing to record authoritative tradition from Moses. But Christians must have their Mishna too, though they have not ventured to be as honest as Jews, by publishing it to the world, lest the shame of its nakedness should be seen.

It demands special notice, that, as we detect the defects of the boasted apostolical succession of Rome, by a failure in its first most essential link; so the chimera of traditions, not contained in Scripture, fails exactly in the same place. For ecclesiastical history is a blank, just where the traditionists should be able to prove it most complete. From the death of the other apostles, to that of John, and a little later, we have, in fact, no history; and are compelled to substitute the most vague conjecture. For the date of Clement is, at the best, but late, and, at the worst, uncertain; while the Epistles of Ignatius, even if they could be trusted, are not sufficiently early; so that a generation, containing the very men who may have learned from the apostles' lips, passed away, leaving us no records. Hege-sippus is lost, and all the writers that remain are but second-hand witnesses; for they who profess to have seen in their childhood the Apostle John are no better, and we know what alterations are made in verbal tradition on passing even

from a first to a second reporter. They who mark the hand of God in his dealings with the church will not fail to see here his design, by blowing upon all other authorities, to leave us to the Scriptures alone.

PART III.—*The Fathers were seriously and even culpably defective in Biblical Science.*

THOUGH their own words have proved to us the deference they paid to the inspired word, they were far from acting on that grand principle with the combined scrupulosity and decision which it deserved. As the earliest of them wrote before the canon was complete, so their successors long betrayed an embarrassing uncertainty on the question which lies at the root of all Christian theology. The Epistle to the Hebrews, which sound criticism has assigned to the Apostle Paul, and which the elder Clement received as inspired, was afterwards thrown among the doubtful books; or, out of deference to the church at Rome, ejected from the canon, though it was the very portion which the church needed to check the course she then pursued. The catholic epistles also, which were written to guard Christians against prevailing errors, were but partially received, even when Eusebius wrote; and if Justin appealed to the Revelation soon after it was written, the use he and others made of it, in support of Millenarianism, fostered in many breasts the most serious doubts of its canonicity.

But while simple ignorance is harmless, compared with false knowledge; to the rejection of inspired books, the fathers added the adoption of spurious writings as divine. Their conduct with regard to the Old Testament was particularly culpable; as the integrity of that first volume of divine revelation had been assured to them by the sanction of our Lord. Incalculable mischiefs followed from this ignorance, or error, concerning the constituent elements of the canon, both of the Old Testament and the New. What would be thought of omitting, in the statutes at large, im-

portant acts of parliament, and inserting others that were never passed? Could he that employed such a collection be deemed a sound lawyer? What the statutes of the realm are in the legal profession, that are the books of Scripture in theology. What then are we to think of the fathers as divines?

The Old Testament was known to the earliest of them only by the Septuagint version, which led them into the most ridiculous comments. Clement quotes Isaiah thus: "We have announced before him as a little child;" instead of "He shall grow up before him as a tender plant" (or sucker;) but Wake, by giving our translation, keeps the mistake out of sight. Augustine gives no flattering account of the Latin versions, which probably engrafted the mistakes of a new on an old translation. To defend the fathers, some here accuse their own church, whether Papal or Protestant; for both have abandoned, for the Hebrew, the version on which the earliest expositors depend. The Syriac, which is now the valued aid of biblical scholars, was, to the most influential part of the church, a nonentity.

The mystical allegorizing of the fathers is often worse than foolish; for while it employs for argument what can produce no conviction, it often destroys the effect of those texts which reveal and support important truth. The scarlet thread which Rahab hung out of her window might, without injury, be made a type of the blood of Christ; but when the Alexandrian Clement quotes the words of David, "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me," they are deprived of their force by this observation: "he says prophetically, 'Mother Eve.'" This puerile mode of interpretation is pronounced "most useful, contributing to right theology, and to piety, as well as to the demonstration of ingenuity."* Then follow some curious specimens of this art, among which, most appropriately, is introduced the Sphynx.

* Strom. v. 415.

As allegory enables the initiated to fetch anything out of anything, it empowered Clement to bring the doctrine of the Father and the Son out of the Verses of Euripides, the Mosaic Revelation from the Epicurean Philosophy, and the Creation from Homer's *Iliad*.^{*} That Plato should have been made a Nicene theologian will appear to many moderns quite natural and just; but Clement finds the Lord's-day, too, foretold in the tenth book of Plato's *Republic*.[†]

Tertullian makes the prince of Tyre, mentioned by Ezekiel, to mean the devil;[‡] and Joseph prefigured Christ; because it is said, "His glory is that of a bull; the horns of a unicorn are his horns; with them he shall equally ventilate the nations even to the extremity of earth," or scatter them as by the wind. Then come the unicorn, the bicorn, and the minotaur, with whatever heathen learning, or perverse ingenuity, can accumulate and apply to Christ.[§] The apples of Sodom are thus exhibited to the Gentiles: "A fiery shower burnt up Sodom and Gomorrah. The land still smells of fire; and if apples grow on the trees, it is to the eye only; for, being touched, they turn into ashes.|| But why did Christ choose twelve apostles, and no other number? I find the figures of the number with the Creator: there were twelve fountains of Elim, and twelve gems in the sacerdotal tunic of Aaron, and twelve stones set up in Jordan." But the reader will not think, with Tertullian, that we can never have enough of this.

The superior sense of Augustine, who is here a thorough Protestant, has cost him the good graces of a modern school, that prefers old wives' fables to inspired Scripture, or common sense. For though the Bishop of Hippo has been called one of the four great lights of the church, it is curious to observe how those who affect to be adherents

^{*} Strom. lib. v. 436.

[†] Ibid. v. 437.

[‡] Adv. Marc. lib. ii. c. 10.

[§] Lib. iii. c. 18.

|| Apol. cont. Gent. c. 40.

to antiquity look askance at his theology. It is, however, consoling to hear one who was in so high repute utter a sentence so orthodox as to deserve to be repeated. "I believe all I find in Scripture; but in other writers only what they prove from Scripture or reason."

The fathers must not be charged with a pretence to freedom from mistakes. Augustine seems to think, when commenting on the Epistle to the Romans,* that God chose men for the foresight of their faith; but he retracted when grown older and wiser; saying, "I had not yet diligently inquired, nor found out what is the election of grace, of which the apostle speaks; there is a remnant according to the election of grace, which certainly is not grace, if any merits preceded it."† Such confessions, which are distasteful to many, are the best things to be found in the fathers; for, after reading Justin's argumentation on the Lord reigning from the wood, meaning the cross, as if it were veritable Scripture, we are relieved by hearing him say, Something may displease the Jew, not only because it is not understood, but not accurately spoken. Augustine's *Retractions* are more honourable to him than much that he never retracted. Of false interpretations these writers are lavish; as when Justin says, "dwelling under his own vine," is having but one wife.‡ The follies of the fathers would make a volume more amusing than edifying; though it would be a good service to the church of God, to expel them from the shrines where they have been too long adored. Would any of their idolaters venture to deliver to a Christian assembly all that the fathers have left on record?

PART IV.—*Both Adversity and Prosperity, however they may have been ultimately overruled for good, operated injuriously on the Theology of the Early Church.*

THOUGH Christians are captivated by Tertullian's felicitous apophthegm, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed

* Propos. 60.

+ *Retract. lib. i. c. 23.*

‡ 372.

of the church," the Scriptures teach us to value freedom from persecution. When the storm rages without, attention is too much absorbed with events to admit of the cultivation of accurate principles. For if the Christian, who is driven to "wander in dens and caves of the earth, desolate, afflicted, tormented," is furnished with the mightiest motives for watchfulness over his own personal religion, he has neither opportunity, nor heart, nor occasion, for critical study.

In the earliest ages, when a single book in manuscript occupied considerable space, the believer, who was driven from his home, could scarcely be said to possess the high advantage of having his Bible for his companion, counselor, comforter, and friend. It was often torn from his grasp by the hand of the tyrant.

Engrossed with distracting events, and deprived of the best opportunities for studying principles, the first Christians were necessarily limited to the honour of intrepid confessors, leaving that of accurate commentators and divines to a more quiet and secure age. But if, in spite of the pressure of the times, any one rose to eminent learning and usefulness, he was sure to be marked for destruction when the demon of persecution was let loose on the church. The same qualities which induced the faithful to commit the care of their souls to a certain pastor, inflamed the enmity of the world, and prompted the cry, "To the lions! Destroy the leader, and the flock will be scattered, as sheep without a shepherd;" as Ignatius describes his flock at Smyrna, when he was condemned to fight with beasts at Rome. History shows the best men sacrificed first, and the pastors leading the way to the stake, just when their talents, graces, and acquirements, were about to produce ripe fruit.

Deprived of its best elements, the church was left to the care of inferior men, often neophytes, whose distinction in society, or eminence as philosophers and rhetoricians,

marked them out for office, while their religion was still immature. Nor was this the only injury that the church suffered from persecution. For when the most distinguished Christians were not killed, but sent to work in the mines, they retained the pastoral office. Cyprian, in his retreat, governed his flock by letters, which are still extant, some of them addressed to ecclesiastics who were working as convicts in the mines of Numidia, in which nine bishops were immured.* In such circumstances, to have preserved in the simplest form the great outlines of the gospel, bearing testimony to its truth, by their sorrows and their blood, and leaving to future generations the duty of more accurate research into its records, and more luminous display of their contents, was no mean achievement.

But now was felt, if not seen, the evil of departure from the apostolic order in the church. The Scriptures had left provision for the plurality of pastors, and had exhibited a majority of examples in favour of several co-presbyter bishops, which in those times of persecution was evidently most desirable, if not absolutely necessary. But, from the days of Ignatius, the monarchical principle had not only become the favourite, but, without even a decent reference to Scripture, been insisted upon as imperative. When, therefore, *the* bishop was torn from his flock, it was left without one who was thought to have a right to govern; for presbyters had not then acquired, as now, by the reaction of circumstances, a sort of episcopal rule in their own charge. The destitution was therefore nearly complete, and the consequences deplorable, which might have been avoided, if episcopal pride had not thought itself wise enough to correct the apostolic rule. Cyprian, however, was such a bishop as wrote from his retreat to tell the presbyters to perform their parts and his too. What bishop would now imitate him?

* Ep. 76, 77.

One unhappy consequence of persecution was very prominent, the undue importance which it gave to the confessors and martyrs' name. Though this was natural, it was neither scriptural nor safe; for the sacred volume gives no sanction to that idolatry of the martyrs which prevailed in the Christian church. Courting persecution, and a kind of worldly ambition for the martyr's crown, are ascribed by some of the fathers to the heretics. Suffering is no infallible proof of a divine faith. It is not the martyrdom that sanctifies religion, but the religion that sanctifies the martyrdom. Yet apostates, who had sacrificed to idols in the hour of danger, obtained, from confessors in prison, or those that were going away to the stake, testimonials which secured the restoration of a hypocrite to the communion of the church. The sayings of martyrs were regarded as divine oracles, and the death of Ignatius, throwing around him a glory which he would never have acquired by his life, has given a factitious value to his letters, and tempted a subsequent age to practise the most flagitious forgeries in his name. Though Cyprian shows that the confessors in prison were neither immaculate nor infallible; men who had but recently been convinced of the truth were supposed to acquire by sufferings a right to more than all the deference due to the most mature and experienced Christian.

But it is well known that, to religion, prosperity is more fatal than adversity. Many of the apostates in the hour of danger became the professed penitents in the season of security, and rushed back into the church with all the guilt of idolatry, and perfidy, and hypocrisy, on their souls. Fresh converts, too, came in, when the storm being again blown over, it became manifest that the Christian cause could by no violence be crushed. Persecution had excited attention to the evidences of our faith, and the constancy of sufferers produced in spectators a rational conviction, which was not always attended with

a spiritual discernment of the true nature of religion, or a genuine faith in Christ. But such acquisitions were hailed as the fruit of the martyrs' blood, without severely examining into the value of the new profession. These converts, when false, must have tainted the theology of the church.

The increase of Christians by birth and education contributed to the same effect. When the first generation that had been converted from the heathen world, or the Jewish church, passed away, their children, educated in the Christian faith, knew that it presented evidences of truth superior to every other religious system on the face of the globe. But the descendants of the pious are not always partakers of "like precious faith," though professing the same religion as the parents, and recognized as members of the same church. We have no history that can tell us in what way the children of believers were received into the full communion of the early churches. Modern confirmation, we know, has scarcely anything in common with the ancient, but the name. Their Christian education would have given to the children of believers high advantages, had it been crowned by that grace which is essential to all religion ; but when the means were substituted for the end, those who were Christians merely as their parents had once been heathens, by birth and education, became a dead weight on the church. The pains taken to teach the neophytes may be seen in Cyril's Catechetical Lectures ; but they confound baptism and regeneration, and, besides being of too late a date for our purpose, they are addressed to unbaptized persons of all ages, and, therefore, throw little light on the manner in which they who were baptized in infancy were received into full communion.

That in times of prosperity there was an influx of equivocal converts was seen and confessed, when the Decian and Diocletian persecutions produced hosts of

apostates; and as these had been received from the ranks of idolaters, their profession, while it lasted, did more to darken and corrupt, than their apostasy to disgrace the Christian church. For if even the sincere converts from heathenism brought with them all the disadvantages we have contemplated, what shall we say of the insincere? To that professor of religion who, to save his life, should sacrifice to Juggernaut, what name should we give? Are we, then, bound to idolize that church which in great part consisted of men who had thus insulted the Most High?

With two exceptions, Origen and Tertullian, both tainted names, the Christian church was, by its early persecutions, left destitute of such writers as afterwards arose, who, enjoying the leisure that attends on peace, produced commentaries and theological treatises of superior worth. Who would pretend that the earliest writers of the British church, when she was struggling against pagan power, are to be preferred to those of later and more peaceful times; or defend the crudities and superstitions of Bede against the great names of many who are comparatively modern?

It is no reflection on the early church to say that, when persecution robbed it of its best elements, and sudden gleams of prosperity brought into it doubtful converts, like swarms of summer flies, it suffered by the times that passed over it, and made little progress in the study of that word which renders us wise to salvation. The disgrace lies rather upon us, who, with far greater advantages, and the warnings which others have afforded, have no further outstripped the brightest examples of ancient times.

The blood of the martyrs was not thrown away, for we are profiting by their testimony; and if they have confirmed our faith, we ought to supply their lack of knowledge. They led the way, indeed, to the fatal error of mingling the kingdom of Christ with the kingdoms of

this world; but they foresaw not the consequences which have been developed to our view; and we who have derived many benefits from their zeal and good intentions, must labour to recover the church from the mischiefs produced by their ignorance, inexperience, superstitions, and mistakes.

PART V.—*The Controversies to which the Heresies of the Earliest Ages gave rise seriously injured the Church.*

MEN who knew not much of the nature of Christianity, nor loved what they knew, were so early induced, by evanescent convictions, or sinister motives, to enter the church, that she soon found herself surrounded by those who had quitted her again, to form rival churches, which Tertullian compared to wasps' nests. Though the number, variety, and extravagance of their errors may have been exaggerated by Irenæus; there is still enough of incontrovertible fact left, to excite our astonishment and grief, and to account for the feverish excitement of the fathers, who became chivalrous heresy-hunters.

But if we may excuse, we cannot justify them for suffering that time which should have been bestowed on the study of the truth, to be wasted on the most absurd and pernicious lies. The inflammatory influence of controversy is early discernible in the writings of those who, becoming polemics before they were divines, were, as Jerome confesses, driven into unwarrantable applications of Scripture, for the sake of stopping an enemy's mouth. The best writers are precisely those that are most peaceful; for just in proportion as the others combat, or overthrow an error, they misrepresent or deny some truth.

Justin's Dialogue betrays the ambition of the polemic, and if he was acquainted with the Epistle to the Hebrews, he had profited little by that which would have contributed more to the conversion of the Jew than all the martyr's allegories. Irenæus was a St. George hunting

dragons ; and who can read his volume without wishing that he had devoted the time he bestowed on heresies, to the more thorough study of the Scriptures? Had he let the heretics alone, they would all have died of themselves ; but while he was immortalizing what deserved nothing but oblivion, he betrayed the secret, that the weakness of the orthodox was the only strength of their foes.

Clement of Alexandria had the Gnostics in view in his work on the true Gnosis, or knowledge ; and the ambition to appear still more knowing than they, has betrayed him into many learned follies. Basilides he attacks by name ; but when no opponent is mentioned, we see at whom he aims, and discover how the polemical spirit draws him aside from the simplicity of truth. The parade of learning which predominates in his works was designed to outshine the adversary, who should rather have been taught, by example as well as precept, to derive the knowledge of religion from the oracles of God. Origen's principal work, being a defence of Christianity against a pagan philosopher, is not open to the censure directed against his master.

But Tertullian was, by constitution, as well as circumstances, a fierce controversialist. His whole theology is polemical, and he cannot teach truth but in the form of an attack upon some error, for which he often substitutes another. For his knight-errantry he found an exciting field, in a world full of gigantic heresies, and bristling with strongholds haunted by demons. If putting an adversary in the wrong were the whole business of a disputant, who was more triumphant than Septimius? But, if men are to be won by speaking the truth in love, we must conclude that, with all his mighty intellect and various learning, the African "laboured in vain, and spent his life for nought."

But, in addition to the diversion of the mind from the peaceful study of the Scriptures, a strong tendency to

exaggerated views was created by the controversy with heretics. The oscillations of the pendulum were seen in the public mind; for as some went too far in one direction, those who opposed them went as far wrong in the opposite, upon the supposition that the farthest from a heresy was the nearest to the truth. If God has, indeed, overruled controversy for the promotion of the faith, it is not the less true that the parties engaged in the battle have often acquired victories for posterity, at their own cost. For how few theological combatants have escaped uninjured! The rare instances have been men of mature religion, and thorough knowledge of Scripture; while the patristic combatants were frequently neophytes, who had yet much to learn.

Though the apologies for Christianity, which form a principal part of the early writings, are honourable to their authors' sincerity and zeal, as well as splendid monuments of the mental power and learning possessed by some of the first converts; no one can read them with a discerning eye and not wish they had been different. It was, doubtless, a contemptible fondness for "the elegant mythology of the Greeks," that made Gibbon complain of the lengthened declamations against idolatry; but there is not the less justice in his censure on the unsatisfactory manner in which the apologists treat their own religion. The spirit of controversy had spoiled them for peaceful instructors; and if their arguments succeeded in making the reflecting part of mankind ashamed of idolatry, their information was not always sufficient to "show the more excellent way." Were the rejection of a false religion equivalent to the adoption of the true, the success of the apologists had been complete. Idolatry was shaken to its foundations; but for want of Christian knowledge, swarms of heretics succeeded in diffusing visionary systems, which substituted mental for material idols. The Dialogue of Minucius Felix is beautiful and interesting, though it

abruptly terminates just where we could have wished to hear the convert witness a good confession. Tertullian's Apologetic Oration to the Gentiles is as injudicious as it is powerful; and the questionable fanciful things that he presses on their belief make us weep for the heathen, to whose salvation he seems ambitious to oppose a fatal hinderance. The internal evidence of Christianity, which is its highest glory, was unhappily obscured by the bad spirit of the apologist.

PART VI.—*The Fathers lived during the Rise of the predicted Apostasy, which included a Corruption of the Doctrine, as well as of the Morals of the Church.*

MANY sincere men, who ought to have known better, reading of Christ's love and faithfulness to the church, have created its fortunes by force of imagination, never deigning to ask of history, what was the fact. Had a pious Israelite, on the faith of God's promise to preserve his people till Messiah should come, indulged in expectations of purity without spot, and prosperity without reverse, how miserably would these dreams have been belied by events! Will the inspired history of even the earliest and purest age of the church suffer us to consider it either infallible, or immaculate? Have we not predictions of the apostasy of churches, as well as of the perpetuity of the church? Are we not told how the prophecy began to be fulfilled? The futile theory, that our religion could not have been corrupted so early as the second century, weighs lighter than air against solid facts. As Paul warned the presbyter bishops of Ephesus, that from "among themselves men would arise speaking perverse things, to draw disciples after them;" so all the latter epistles contain intimations of many antichrists going out from the churches to which they never really belonged.

The seven churches of Asia are exhibited by Him whose eyes are flames of fire, as beacons, rather than patterns.

Ephesus had profited so little by Paul's warning that she is threatened with the removal of the candlestick; and Laodicea is told, "Thou art neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm." When the Thessalonians were apprised that the Man of sin would not be revealed till there should come a falling away, were they not assured that the apostasy of, at least, a part of the church, was not only possible, but certain? Could Paul of Samosata have been recognized for a Christian bishop, when marching through the streets, in secular pomp, surrounded by troops of women singing hymns to his praise, if his church had not been most miserably corrupt? The Greek churches were, for the first three hundred years, hastening to that state which, in the next three hundred, brought Mahomet upon them, to sweep them away as with a flood.

If Rome originated not the corruption of doctrine, which must be ascribed to heathen philosophy, the idol of the Greeks; her orthodoxy may be attributed to the Epistle to the Romans, the object of her reverence, or even of her pride. For this was her sin, against which that very epistle warned her, saying, "Be not highminded, but fear; lest God spare not thee." The city accustomed to domination, the Babylon of the fathers, as well as of the Scriptures, corrupted the discipline of the church, and cared for no doctrine but that which might be made subservient to her rule. Tertullian exclaims, "The bishop of bishops has become the patron of adulterers." The very genius of the Antichrist which the Scriptures reveal, is the pride of domination; for they describe it as "sitting in the temple of God, and yet exalting itself above all that is called God, or is worshipped." Who could see the pope brought into the cathedral of St. Peter, on grand occasions, and not ask why we should go any further for Antichrist?

The steady progress towards this great apostasy is visible, from the apostles' days, till the whole length

mystery of iniquity was revealed. It is vain to say, "We do not see it; and when Antichrist shall come, all men must see him;" for this is just what the Jews say of the Messiah. Obstinate to close our eyes cannot prove there is nothing to be seen. We will, therefore, now advance to a view of the symptoms of apostasy which the fathers betray.

Those who thought they saw in Nero the predicted Antichrist must have attributed to their age great corruption of doctrine, or they were grossly ignorant of the Scriptures, which declare that the Man of sin would obtain his ascendancy by the departure of professors from the primitive purity and ancient faith. Such as believed that Hadrian was Antichrist must have thought the same of his era; and as one persecutor after another was supposed to be the Man of sin, we must conclude that some in our days are lauding the times which they who knew them by experience thought bad enough to be the era of Antichrist. In fact, it is not the fault of the fathers of any age if theirs is taken for the pattern church which all are bound to imitate; for they each in succession censure and deplore their own times. "O God, to what days hast thou reserved me!" says one of the earliest; and each of his successors responds to the sigh.

Clement's letter to the Corinthian Christians proves them not immaculate; and though he praises their former state, we know from an inspired epistle to them, that this was oratory at the expense of truth; praising their past to make them ashamed of their present conduct. The Epistles of Ignatius prepared the way for Hildebrand, who might find in them an apology for his most atrocious language. To adopt the phraseology of homœopathy, the millesimal portion of this spirit would suffice to poison a world.

The heathenism taught in the chair of Alexandria would have shocked the men of apostolic times. The

next in succession, Origen, though superior to his master, by pursuing the same course, alarmed the church, which, however, owes the equivocal position in which he was placed, between saint and heretic, to the wounded pride of Demetrius, rather than to his love of the truth. After it ceased to be prudent to mention the author, the sentiments of Origen were quoted by the oracles of the church, which for ages was poisoned by his errors when it was not safe to mention his name. That the corruption was rapidly advancing when Tertullian wrote, he himself declares; for at length the church was too impure for him, who denounced it as an assemblage of animal men, *ψυχικοί*, that rejected the promised Paraclete. This was, indeed, the suspicious testimony of a schismatic, if not a heretic; but his earlier writings prove that while he was an acknowledged oracle, he often gave responses that were anything but flattering to the church. Nor did his war against her destroy his credit; for, after all, Cyprian hailed him master. Eusebius and Jerome laud him, which they could scarcely have ventured to do, if it had been notorious that all Tertullian's censures were calumnious and false. Carthage must have been in an apostate state when her bishop wrote his letters, which are full of complaints and reproaches, not only against the laity, but the clergy, too, and even the confessors and martyrs. The lapsed will probably be abandoned without defence, but be it remembered, they had formed a large portion of what was called the church. The theology of such times necessarily partook of their character, and when we know the men, we cannot place much confidence in their creed.

But as the Arianism which, in the fourth century, set in like a flood, to sweep away the faith, had its commencements in the incautious language of the orthodox, who, intent on proving their monotheism against heathen polytheists, approached too near to the Trinity of Arius; so the Pelagianism of the fifth age may be clearly traced to

the second, when a solicitude to resist the fatalism of the stoics, or of the gnostics, drove the fathers into expressions that seemed to deny the doctrine of divine grace. Origen, once eagerly followed, being found to have prepared the way for Pelagius, was abandoned by Jerome and others, as well as by Austin. They perceived that the Alexandrian oracle had, by applying to the ceremonial law what the apostle said of the moral, changed a system of grace into a law of works. But asceticism and monasticism had too far perverted the whole church, to admit of her recovery, by such means as the following ages were willing to employ. The predicted apostasy steadily advanced, and many years of darkness, superstition, and guilt, had their commencement in ages that have been ignorantly lauded as primitive and pure. It is, indeed, not surprising that modern Pelagians should praise the times that gave birth to their creed; but it is somewhat inconsistent, while professing profound deference for the church, to cherish the heresy she condemned.

As the polluted and polluting stream was fed by rivulets till it became a flood that swept away all before it, we never can exactly tell how far any age or individual was under its influence, except by a comparison of their works with the revealed standard of truth. That the earliest writers must be watched, and everything they say be tried by the infallible rule, will be readily admitted by every one who knows the progress which corruption was making, and to what impartial student of ecclesiastical history can this be unknown?

There is scarcely an error in doctrine, or corruption in practice, or superstition in worship, by which the church was ever troubled, that may not be traced to very early times, and that was not defended by some venerated name. This, however denied as incredible, and decried as an infidel reflection on the Christian church, is not only demonstrable by fact, but is in reality confirmatory to

our faith. For so explicit and so loud are the warnings of Scripture concerning a fearful apostasy, that every sincere believer must be watching for its rise with anxious interest; and so clear are the assurances and the proofs, that from the days of the apostles, the mystery of iniquity was already at work, that the most melancholy records of its advancement in each subsequent age serve but to convince us, that, though "all flesh is grass, the word of the Lord endureth for ever."

LECTURE VIII.

CONCLUSION.

WE have, through our whole course, dwelt chiefly on what is, by emphasis, the theology of the *early* church, tracing it from pure scriptural simplicity, to the point where acknowledged corruption of manners tells aloud of something wrong in the ministry of the word. But where we stop, as too late to be really the church of the fathers, generations having passed away, and degenerate sons risen up, so that "there were few like the fathers;"* here some would begin,† and adopting this as their halcyon period, declare that now the church was come to maturity, and all before, even including the apostolic age, was pining infancy. The imprudence of this scheme is equalled only by its impotence.

For the boastful advocates of patristic orthodoxy have combined the Valentinianism of Marcion with the Montanism of Tertullian; so extremes meet, and he that has sailed in an eastern direction salutes at the Antipodes him that took the opposite course. Marcion was too wise to be taught by apostles, who were rude, simple, half-informed men; and Tertullian is conducted by the Paraclete of Montanus to the maturity of Christianity in the third century. Hear him: "The rule of faith is absolutely one, single,

* Clemens Alexandrinus:

† The school that has produced the Oxford Tracts has commenced translations of the fathers with those of the fifth century.

immoveable, irreformable. But this law of faith remaining still, other affairs of discipline and conversation admit the novelty of correction; verily the grace of God operating and advancing even to the end. For is the work of God such that it should either have ceased, or desisted from advancing, while the devil is always operating and adding every day to the ingenuity of iniquity? Therefore the Lord has sent the Paraclete, that as human mediocrity could not, at once, receive all things, it might by little and little be directed and ordered, and discipline be conducted to perfection by that vicar of the Lord, the Holy Spirit. 'I have yet many things,' he says, 'to tell you; but ye cannot bear them now. When he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will lead you into all truth, and announce to you things to come.'* What is, then, the administration of the Spirit but this, that discipline may be regulated, that the Scriptures may be revealed, that the intellect may be reformed, that we may be advanced to better things? There is nothing without its age. All things abide their time."† He then goes on to illustrate this by the progress of vegetation from the flower to the ripe fruit. But what said the church of this fancied advancement to perfection in Tertullian's days? She cast him out as a heretic, and all his fine sayings are henceforth rebutted by the cool remark, Tertullian was not a man of the church.

Of this, indeed, there is sufficient evidence in the passage we have quoted. It contains the virus of that very heresy which he had condemned in Marcion. Instead of distinguishing between the apostles when Christ spoke to them, and the same men (who were, indeed, not the same) after the descent of the promised Spirit, the words of Tertullian imply what Marcion openly asserted, that the apostles had not taught the whole gospel. The defects of their early instructions were, according to Tertullian, to be supplied by the Paraclete of Montanus, who, centuries after, made

* John xvi.

† De Virg. vel. c. 1.

divine revelation complete. And this is the doctrine of some in our day, whether they derive it from Tertullian the Montanist, or Dodwell the ultra-episcopalian. Apostles left the church an infant; and bishops nursed it to manhood. It will not palliate the error to say, "All this is applied to discipline, not to doctrine." Tertullian speaks of truth without distinction, or even specifies the glory of Christ, which the Spirit was to reveal.

There is a far better apology to be made for the Montanist, that, with all his fanaticism, he still regards the Scriptures as the standard of faith and practice; for "this is the work of the Paraclete, that the Scriptures may be revealed." He supposed that they were imperfectly understood, which was, alas! too true. Yet the man who had the most extravagant notions of the inspiration of his new sect still considers that it was not to give additions to revelation, or make us independent of it; but was to reveal what was contained in Scripture, though not known to the church. This is less fanatical than the theory of unwritten traditions, which, by sharing, would supersede the authority of the word of God.

But they who set up a later age as the standard, the maturity of Christianity, share the common fate of error, to promote, in spite of themselves, the cause of truth. They declare that theirs is not the apostolic church, for they abandon this as too rude and simple; and when they talk of the fathers, they mean not those who are so by eminence, but such as are not even good sons; for they belonged to an age which they themselves pronounced so corrupt, that Antichrist might be immediately expected; and if we believe them, we should bless Him who "determined the times before appointed, and fixed the bounds of our habitations," that he has not cast our lot on such days.

But we are witnessing the downward course of error. The Scriptures are first forsaken, as the records of an age too simple, the history of churches too pure and too inde-

pendent to please a hierarchy; the apostolical fathers next are chosen, instead of the apostles; but it is soon found that the same objections again occur, and therefore the ground is changed again; the sons of those fathers are made the standard, but only to be abandoned for *their* sons again, till it is impossible to say what is meant by the church of the fathers.

Let not the student of the Scriptures, then, shrink from the contest concerning the opinions of the ancients. Antiquity is most to be dreaded by those who vaunt it most, for they would be the last to restore the primitive times. The sanctuary in which the fathers are enthroned is a crypt, for, like other antique idols, they cannot bear the light. Their theology is often so heterodox, their expositions of Scripture so absurd and contradictory, and their chastity so obscene, that he who would dethrone them has but to bring a blazing torch into their shrines, and show to the crouching multitude what it is they have adored. Their high priests, like the Chinese, offer *scraps* of gilded paper, but would not dare to publish in the vernacular tongue *all* that the fathers have written, nor consent to be bound by all that they have prescribed.

Mortality is never more cruelly mocked than when exalted to the throne of Deity. The attributes of humanity that might have been esteemed, or at least tolerated, among other men, are then contrasted with the perfections of the divinity assumed, and for a respectable man we have a ridiculous God. The misfortunes of the fathers demand our candour and our pity, but most unfortunate have they been in the worship they have received; for it has placed them on an elevation which they cannot bear, and has compelled those who would have apologized for their simple opinions to despise their pretended oracles.

The theology of the church was pure in proportion as it was early; but only two fragments remain by which we can judge, and of these, one is debased by the fable of the

Phœnix, which marks the difference between an epistle *from* and that *to* the Romans. After a blank of nearly half a century, the second becomes known to us by documents that prove the interval to have been adverse to the purity of the church, though the Epistles of Ignatius were made such a field for forgeries that their testimony is dubious, even where it may be true. Justin, the only considerable writer of the middle of this century, was at once a cause and an evidence of the corruption introduced by spurious philosophy; and Irenæus, at the close, is a witness that this age of heresies was but imperfectly furnished with advocates for the truth. The most eminent authors belong to the third century, which developed the poison of the Alexandrian school, where Clement sat as a Janus, now presenting the face of the Greek philosopher, and now that of the Christian teacher, who formed Origen so much after his own image as to give alarm to the church, which, too late, discovered the devious course of her most famous sons. Of the Latin fathers, Minucius Felix, the most pure, was eclipsed by Tertullian, the most powerful, whose dazzling arms were alternately turned against heretics, heathens, and his own mother church. Cyprian, his admirer, was converted too late, and was too much distracted by persecution and strife, to become a theologian; and as a mere copyist, is of little worth.

Three centuries the church lived, with but one biblical scholar, Origen; and not one that can be called a divine. The infantile simplicity of the times nearest to the apostles, which was wise enough to content itself with literally repeating their testimony, was fatally changed for the pride of philosophy, which attempted improvements by amalgamating the revelation of heaven with the reveries of Plato; while the Scriptures, despoiled of their dignity and use by apocryphal additions, and allegorical interpretation, were compelled to sanctify the extravagances of asceticism with the name of Christian perfection. As the hydra of heresies

frightened the church from its propriety, so persecution cut off its best members, till the more discerning survivors poured bitter lamentations over the loss of its virgin state. The Scriptures, however, though not without unwarrantable additions, remained to testify against the errors and corruptions of the times, and to preserve the great principles of a spiritual society, the aggregate of many catholic churches, whose discipline, indeed, was changing, but whose foundation was, the unity of God; the trinity of persons; the creation and fall of angels and men; the divinity of Christ, often inaccurately expressed; his incarnation and atoning sacrifice on the cross; his resurrection and the mission of his Spirit; the regeneration of our fallen nature, too much identified with baptism; justification by faith, and the necessity of holiness; the resurrection of the body, final judgment and eternal life, generally associated, however, with fanatical expectations of the speedy coming of Antichrist, and a Millennium, too spiritual for worldly men, too carnal for a Christian, and too absurd for any sane mind.

Theology in its higher sense, the science of divine revelation, surveyed by an enlightened and comprehensive mind, studied in its original records, wisely interpreted according to the analogy of faith, arranged into a natural order, by which the antecedents lead to just and important consequences, and the reasons of every truth are developed and applied, was, to the early church, unknown. Nor should this assertion offend or surprise; for it is in perfect keeping with all the plans of God, which reveal facts to the simplest age, but reserve the development of the reasons for more advanced times. During thousands of years, men breathed the air, of whose constituents they knew nothing; drank water, without suspecting that it was composed of gases; stood upon the earth, ignorant of the laws of gravity; gazed on the heavens with delight, though bewildered by their motions; retired to rest when they

thought the horses of the sun had gone "to quench their flaming fetlocks in the sea;" and rose, to enjoy the light which they fancied he had restored, by travelling round the earth. A Newton was kept in store for times that could follow out his discoveries, and the magic of chemistry now extorts the secrets of nature, for those who have a thousand new opportunities of applying them to practical use.

The simple doctrines—we may say, the naked facts—of revelation suffice for the salvation of all that believe. Those who felt that they were fallen creatures were humbled, though they pretended not to discuss the mystery of the fall; that "Christ died for the ungodly," gave peace to men whose writings show too clearly that they understood not what the Scriptures have revealed of the *rationale* of the atonement; the grace that changed their hearts was known to them, as many other blessings are to us, simply by experience; and the hope of the resurrection to eternal life cheered the mind that was unequal to discussions on personal identity.

The germs of systematic theology were early scattered by such as could not divine to what they would grow; but in the fifth century, Augustine, to oppose Pelagius, commenced a career, which was pursued by Godeschalcus, the schoolmen, Leibnitz, Wolf, Stapfer, the Turretines, Gale, Owen, Edwards, and Williams; till ordinary divines should surpass the most eminent of the fathers; though so much still remains to be discovered, that the children of Time's old age will be fathers to us all.

For the doctrine concerning the church we have reserved, at the close of these Congregational Lectures, space for the more copious reflections which, from *us*, it now especially demands. *We* are men of one book, trembling at the curse denounced on him that shall add to the words of God; but while, with the apostle, we inquire, "What saith the Scripture, which is able to make the man of God perfect?" it is not uninteresting, or unprofitable, to observe how this prin-

ciple has preserved to the world the only churches which can at all bear to be examined by the writings of the earliest age. This was well known to our founders ; for such men as Ainsworth, Goodwin, and Owen, were not only the first theologians of their day, but well acquainted with the fathers, while attempting to carry the reformation which others made in doctrines and rites into the very constitution of the church. Corruption had created a new thing ; the aim of our churches was to restore the old.

Exactly, then, in proportion to the value of the argument brought against us is the stringency of our reply. They who plead for antiquity, willingly forget that the apostles are more ancient than the fathers, of whom it is said, " They lived near the fountain-head of authority, where the streams were most pure ; " which applies with double force to the apostles who lived with Christ himself. But it is of the very essence of our opponents' argument, if honestly carried out, to attach the greatest importance to the most ancient fathers ; for to pass them by, and appeal to those of later date, is but to attempt obedience to the stupid orders of Mummius, to make new antiques, virtually abandoning the principle professedly employed.

What is now called the authority of the fathers was, to the earliest of them, unknown, and is a modern doctrine, palmed upon the world under a false name. Not one of them, whether early or late, ever mentions his own authority, which, if true, they should have taught, as the apostles asserted theirs ; because it is due to Christ and to his church, to inform us who are the authoritative expositors of his will. The mere silence of the fathers on this point would be enough to degrade them from the throne ; but they speak, and tell aloud their own want of authority, appealing to the Scriptures as the word of the Lord, which demands the study and obedience of the whole church. Here, with the two Clements, Polycarp, Ignatius, Justin, Irenæus, Origen, Tertullian, Cyprian, we take our stand, leaving to innova-

tors the melancholy glory of venturing to abandon the ancient faith in the sole authority of the word of God.

The earliest fathers attached the true idea to the Greek word *ἐκκλησία*, and always considered *a* church to be a congregation, or assembly, convoked or evoked out of a promiscuous mass. Those who belonged to this assembly were called by its name, even after its session had broken up, and its members were dispersed; and all *such* assemblies, scattered over the whole world, were called the catholic churches, when their distinct localities were in view,—but the church, when the identity of their faith was considered, and their relation to Christ, as one body, of which he was the sole Head.

The phrase congregational church, then, is pleonastic, being little else than a church church; but such pleonasms become necessary, when time and events have deprived a noun of its radical signification, which must then be conveyed by an adjective, that originally, being unnecessary, would have appeared absurd. That the earliest fathers meant, by *A* church, a single worshipping assembly, and by *THE* church, the aggregate of a number of complete churches, alike independent of each other's authority, and dependent upon Christ alone, can be demonstrated, if that word may ever be employed beyond the bounds of mathematics.

Having seen that what are now called congregational are the original churches, not only of the Scriptures, but of the first three hundred years, we may proceed to observe that even the most strenuous opponents of this truth have not been able entirely to banish or abandon the idea of an independent church. For what is their notion of *a* church, as distinct from *the* church, or the whole body of Christians? The most prominent and popular idea is that of a national church, consisting of the whole population of a nation, or of, at least, as many as adhere to the religion sanctioned by the preference and support of the

state. This definition, must, to every logical mind, be unsatisfactory; for if, after contemplating the clear, simple idea of the ἐκκλησία, or single assembly, we turn not to that of the whole body of the faithful, viewed by the eye of God as one assembly, before his throne, how can we define the *tertium quid*, or third thing, that is neither of the two former? In Spain, the church includes the whole nation, but denies its own distinct existence as a church, being absorbed in what is called the catholic church; in France, the national church, supported by government, consists of what is usually considered two churches, papal, and presbyterian protestant; in England, it is said to be the majority, but is only the moiety; in Scotland, it is not half the nation; and in Ireland, the national church contains not a tenth of the nation. The United States of America know no national church.

Define a national church as we may, it is a modern innovation, unknown to the ages through which we have now passed. Till the fourth century was somewhat advanced, the governments of the earth opposed Christianity; and when Constantine favoured and patronised it, if he produced anything, it was not a national, but an imperial church; for the numerous nations that composed the Roman empire had not their distinct churches; but all, whether Britons, Gauls, Germans, Italians, or Spaniards; whether Greeks, Latins, or Barbarians, were included in the emperor's church. As Julian laboured to undo his uncle's work, the Christians became once more dissenters from the religion of the state. That the earliest fathers knew nothing of a national church, or the right of any nation to form itself into a church, is undeniable; for when they refer to national distinctions, they use the language to convey the ideas of Scripture, that is, of independents, which speaks of "the churches in Judæa, the churches of Macedonia," as the fathers say, "the churches in Germany."

Instead of thinking there were as many churches in the world as there were nations, the first Christian writers

considered there were in any and every nation as many churches as there were Christian congregations. The complete development of the idea of a national church is of no earlier date than the Reformation; and in our country it owns Henry the Eighth as its unholy creator. If we judge of the work by the workman, what are we to think of his national church with its royal head? Princes in earlier times had partially acted on the principle without avowing it, or pretending to anything more than a local and limited rule over a part of what was considered the Christian church in the more catholic sense. For the germ of the national is first discovered in the Roman church, which has found it necessary to tolerate the phrase, "the liberties of the Gallican church," and virtually to admit the shadow, if not the substance, of national churches.

But as all such things are alike destitute of scriptural sanction, and unknown to the ancient fathers; so are they essentially schismatic. When, from the radical idea of a congregation of Christians, we, by necessity turn to others with whom we do not congregate, because we cannot all worship in one place, we dare not make our next step national, for this would be to create a schism; but must make it catholic. That such was the spirit and practice of the earliest Christians no one acquainted with their history will venture to deny.* When philosophical sceptics censured Christianity for not inculcating patriotism, Soame Jenings justly replied, "This is not its defect, but its perfection; for if our religion is not patriotic, it is something better—it is cosmopolite." Instead of the schismatic spirit of nationality, by which an Englishman is taught to hate a Frenchman, and a patriot glories in subjugating others, though at the price of desolating a world, to exalt his own little birth-spot; Christianity inculcates philanthropy, or the love of the human race, teaching that God "has made of one blood all nations to

* Ep. to Diognetus.

dwell on all the face of the earth ;" and that as " we have all one Father, all we are brethren." " The kindness and love of God our Saviour towards men," and his redeeming to himself a people out of every kindred, tribe, and nation under heaven, to bring them all into heaven, as their common Father's house, became, to the primitive Christians, the mighty motives to cultivate the cosmopolite, instead of the national, falsely called patriotic, spirit.

When a courtly poet said, " The dissenters are only half Englishmen," he ignorantly paid them the highest compliment, by the very same censure that was cast upon the first disciples of Christ, who were accused of being scarcely half Romans, because they had exchanged the savage Roman patriotism that trampled down whole continents, to exalt an Italian city, for the philanthropy that said, " I am a man, and nothing human is to me foreign." Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Tertullian, glory not in their nationality, but in their relationship to the church of every nation and tongue. Far from being a thing to boast of, a national church is a schism, in violation of the catholicity of Christianity. Though contiguity and similarity of language may produce more actual communion between the churches of one nation, than their members hold with those at the ends of the earth, this is a mere accident of humanity that involves no principle; just as neighbours more frequently reciprocate kindnesses, merely because they can.

The original genius of the Christian church, as exhibited in the Scriptures and in the writers of the next ages, was by principle catholic, and only by the attributes of man, congregational. The first Christians belonged to a church in the strict sense of that word, simply because they were not omnipresent; but as soon as they stepped out of the assembly, the *man* might feel circumscribed by the limits of a nation; but the *Christian* overleaped bounds too narrow for his enlarged soul, and felt himself

in "*the church of God diffused over the whole world.*" That which has been charged upon congregationalism as a defect, or even a crime, is, indeed, its glory. It knows no third thing between *a church* and *the church*, meaning by the former, the assembly with which we worship, and by the latter, the whole body of the faithful on earth, and we might say in heaven too. That this is the state of things exhibited in Scripture needs no proof; that it continued through many generations has been shown by numerous quotations from the writers of nearly three hundred years.

A national church, therefore, if it means anything more than the accidental intimacies of contiguous churches, is at once a schism among Christians, and the sin of a nation. Could the novel idea, so familiar to us, have been made to pass before the mind of Clement of Rome, or Alexandria, of Justin Martyr, Ignatius, Polycarp, or Origen, they would have exclaimed, "O the guilty schism!" A communion which takes the name of a nation, as if Christianity had not "thrown down the middle wall of partition, so making peace!" A body separated, alike from that which calls itself catholic, branding the more ancient churches with the name of the Greek schism, and from all those which have, with herself, separated from Rome; shut out like our little isle, which the ancients considered as severed from the whole world, admitting no others to her ministrations, and confining her own ministers to their prison house; yet calling herself *the church*, denouncing others as schismatics, and appealing to the fathers!

Her wiser and better sons, indeed, blush and sigh over this schismatic position, feeling the enlarged heart of a catholic Christian press against these prison bars, and threaten to burst forth, to hold fellowship with all saints. How long shall the worse prevail against the better portion?

Advancing to her destined perfection, Christianity will annihilate divisions, bringing us all back to the original simplicity and purity of as many churches as there are congregations of real Christians, forming together one church of Christ.

The congregationalist is the true catholic, united to *a* church, simply because he is not endued with ubiquity, and loving all other members of *the* church.

As to the elements of which a Christian church should be composed, the earliest antiquity agrees with the congregationalist in describing them as saints. To Diognetus they are exhibited in the same colours as in the Acts of the Apostles; and the salutations of Clement, Polycarp, and Ignatius, speak the same language as we read in the introduction to the Epistles of Paul. Numerous hints are given of great defection from the true Christian character; but these are deplored as sins that brought the judgments of heaven on the church, and persecution was welcomed as the winnowing fan, designed to blow away the chaff, and leave nothing but the pure wheat behind. A church, including all the vile characters that are to be found in a whole nation would have appeared to the earlier fathers a flat contradiction.

Some of the ancient heresies were headed by men who sought to be revenged on churches, which had cast them out as sinners that should have no fellowship with saints. Churches without discipline appeared to the primitive Christians "as a city without walls." Only such as put away wicked persons can claim the sanction of the ancients; and it is well known that excommunication was originally the act of each single assembly, with its bishop at its head; while, by the same authority, were given letters of peace, which, like those that pass among congregational churches, introduced the members of one church to communion with another. All this, in a national church, is impracticable, confessedly not practised; and

annual lamentations over the loss of the ancient godly discipline must, to those who know the real cause, appear, at the best, proofs of deplorable ignorance, and at the worst, a hypocritical farce. Church courts, armed with the power of the sword that smites the body, may be called spiritual; but they are, by the just judgment of Heaven, destructive of all spiritual discipline, consigning the sword that should pierce the soul to rust in its scabbard. No wise government will now suffer any other than a scriptural church to exercise real discipline. Neither the fathers, however, nor their sons, employed any censure but such as is practised in congregational churches, which, affecting the spiritual relation of the subject, left his civil *status* untouched.

Congregationalists are told that the primitive churches had bishops. Unquestionably. They had a bishop to every church, and some of them, especially the most ancient, had more than one. But these were all bishops of congregational churches; for there were, during several ages, no others, and even to Cyprian's days, "one church, one altar, one bishop," was a catholic maxim. Presbyter bishops are recognized by Clement of Rome, by Polycarp, and Irenæus, and Clement of Alexandria; and while the distinction between presbyter and bishop is declared by Jerome to be not from the Scriptures, but by ecclesiastical arrangement; so surreptitiously was it introduced, that the ancient language was preserved long after the apostolic order had been changed; just as Augustus craftily retained the name of the republic and the titles of its officers, while he reigned as autocrat upon an imperial throne.

That the appointment of the bishop required the consent of the body of the faithful, the congregationalist can show, not only from the Scriptures, but from the fathers of three centuries; nor can any other mode of making a bishop be sustained by the earliest ecclesiastical records. That a church might, for just causes, remove its bishop

from his chair is clearly proved. Often was a bishop unexpectedly elected by the sudden shout that vociferated his name in the congregation assembled to choose the pastor. Cyprian himself was called to the chair of Carthage, "the whole multitude declaring its good pleasure," to use the language of the Roman Clement. The disorders which arose on these occasions were the avowed cause for transferring, at a later period, the choice, from the people to the clergy; but who would ascribe authority to changes made when Christians fought bloody battles for a bishop? The further transition from the clergy to the civil magistrate, as the bishop's creator, was so abhorrent from the principles of even the later fathers, that a council declared an appointment made by secular influence to be *ipso facto* void. The earlier fathers, however, would say, that, in this country, there are no bishops but those that were chosen by congregational churches. The name they would see in one place, but in another, the thing.

That deacons were not ministers of the word, but administrators of the secularities of the church, ministers of tables and widows, as Jerome calls them, is abundantly attested by the apostolical fathers; and Irenæus censures those who denied that their appointment was recorded by Luke in the sixth chapter of the Acts. By their transmutation into ecclesiastics, the design of God is frustrated, one of the most striking internal evidences of our religion is destroyed, and the poor of Christ's flock, bereft of the proofs of his faithful care, are left to the tender mercies of the world's appointment, a parochial overseer. The very first elements, therefore, out of which a priest is now created are the elements of corruption. An apostolic Christian, or church, we must seek in the writings of the apostles; a Christian, or church, according to the fathers, differs in each century, being purest in the earliest, and becoming more and more remote from the original idea, as we are borne down the stream of time.

The individual, or society, that would find a resting-place, must retreat, through ages of alterations, to build, as the earliest fathers professed to do, on "the foundation of prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone."

To this all should, all must, at last, recur; for the revival of appeals to the fathers is but one of the ephemeral "fashions of the world, which passeth away." Nothing can stand before divine authority, breathing in the Scriptures alone; one text of which can put a host of fathers to the rout. For they are themselves fatal to the cause which they are employed to defend, furnishing its opponents with patristic authority for wielding "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." The appeal to the fathers may be put down by a complete translation of their whole works, which, in Italy or Spain, would be placed in the Index Expurgatorius. But he who is convinced that it is not lawful to do evil that good may come, would be reluctant to bewilder and defile mankind with so much folly, impurity, and error, as the long catalogues of the ancient writings contain.

Those who know little more of the fathers than as sainted names, may suspect that we have surveyed them with an evil eye, to cull from their works weeds nauseous and noxious, where we might have gathered flowers, whose fragrance is health; but the better informed know that we have given their best passages, and of their worst have left many untouched. Whole pages, on which the writers seem to have bestowed great pains, and to have prided themselves, as displays of their most precious lore, are so pitiful, wearisome, and disgusting, that, for our own relief, we have passed them by; nor could we have dared to give a full detail of their errors, absurdities, and false morality, in a book intended for Christian use. It would have been more pleasant to imitate the pious sons of Noah, and hide the fathers'

shame, had not false friends proved real foes, and by claiming for them the rank of semi-apostles, imposed on us the necessity of placing them in their true light.

We pretend not (for who could?) to an infallible judgment, or a perfect exhibition of all that the early church believed; but we have told the truth, praised where we could, and in the great outlines of doctrine have proved the harmony of the fathers with Scripture, while we have exposed errors and follies of which any modern theologian might be ashamed. Candour is due to the ancients, as to every man, and we have shown why they could not be expected to possess what has been claimed for them by others, but disclaimed by themselves. In talents, they were as different as the men of our own times; some being weak and superstitious; others bold and speculative; while a third class combined the properties of the two. Their piety, therefore, however eminent, partook of the character of their minds, and such were the disadvantages of their position, that if we are not advanced immensely beyond them, it is to our everlasting shame.

Though controversy, like all the other evils that have afflicted this fallen world, has been, by infinite wisdom and grace, overruled for good; it has also left indelible marks of a mischievous origin, in the injurious effects it has produced even on those who were enlisted on the side of truth; for nothing but infallible wisdom and immaculate purity can preserve us from being driven into some deviation from exact propriety, when agitated by a hostile force. Appeals to the fathers, as a second Bible, or as authoritative expositors of the inspired book, may have warped opponents into a contemptuous opinion of writings which still have their own proper value and use. While the judicious reader will find in the ancients, not a rival, but a foil to the Scriptures, the literary history of the earlier converts to Christianity cannot fail to be instructive to the

latest generation. Those whom we should not follow, but shun as the lighthouse on a dangerous rock, may still guide us to a safe port.

As long as we have the inspired writings, we may be safely ignorant of that which is uninspired ; but then we must remember the apostolic charge, " If any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant." Unhappily, however, knowledge is assumed, or affected, where it is not possessed ; and both the idolaters, and the despisers of the fathers, often take things for granted, without adequate research. As they who virtually abandon divine for human guides are now exercising great diligence in consulting their oracles, it becomes us also to listen and know what is their response. Only error can profit by ignorance ; knowledge is the friend of truth. To a student of the Scriptures, the reading of the fathers is a sufficient antidote to the poisonous doctrine of their quasi infallibility ; but it is easy to impose on the ignorant, by garbled extracts from men of saintly names, and strangely heterodox or discordant creeds.

The design of God to maintain the exclusive authority of his word is manifest in the theology of the early church. In that communion which has carried to the utmost length the claims of the fathers, the Holy Scriptures are a prohibited book. However, this may be denied, for it is too shocking to the Christian mind to be honestly confessed, wherever Rome reigns the Bible retires ; nor does any one read it but by special permission from the priests, which they who are under their influence seldom ask. In proportion as those who are deemed Protestants ascribe authority to what they call the church, they depress the Scriptures, become enemies to Bible Societies, and deny both the right and the ability of the Christian people to search the Word of God for themselves. As Rome is a perfect Proteus, and they who have " drunk of the wine of her fornication " assume all shapes, a more plausible

theory is imposed on our countrymen, the authority of the fathers as interpreters of Scripture, which must not be understood but in their sense.

God has, however, so mercifully provided against this degradation of his word to the rank of an amphibological oracle, that they who thus blaspheme it are without excuse. The stronghold of the papal party is the point where the fathers agree; for there, we are told, they have legitimate authority. But men may happen to agree in error; or may combine to tell a falsehood; and weak minds are usually carried away in the same direction, by the prevailing fallacies of their country and age. The discord of the fathers, on many points, destroys their authority when they accord; for the inspiration of the sacred writers is proved by a harmony that is perfect. The fathers make no scruple to contradict each other.* Where we had the best right to expect harmony, we find most discord.

To know where the fathers agree, and where they disagree, we must read them all thoroughly. To this who can honestly pretend? It is a study for a life. Numerous ancient works are lost, and some have but recently been rescued from oblivion, to which Rome would gladly remand many a troublesome witness. Are Tatian, Origen, Tertullian, to be reckoned fathers or heretics? Are the works they wrote while in the bosom of the church (which cannot always be ascertained) damaged by their subsequent heresy or schism? Cyprian, who declares, with the Apostle John, that apostates never were of the church,† yet revered the Montanist Septimius, as if his separation from the prevailing party were no apostasy from the faith. We are often, therefore, listening to Tertullian, the heretic, when we suppose we are hearing Cyprian, the bishop and martyr.

The harmony of the fathers with each other has been

* Aug. de Doct. Christ. lib. ii. c. 28.

† Ep. 55.

said to stamp them with authority, and *we* admit that their agreement with the Scripture entitles them to our respect. But while there is one point in which they actually do accord, both with each other and with Scripture, it is that very principle in which their pretended admirers condemn them all, and the Scriptures too ; for they all appeal to Scripture as the ultimate authority, and exhort the whole body of the faithful to study the divine word ; though the papal and semi-papal party here treat the fathers and the Scriptures with scorn. Is it not difficult almost to impossibility, to give such men credit for honesty, after making all due apologies for prejudice or imbecility ? If, on the other hand, there is anything in which the early fathers agree with each other, but differ from Scripture, it is in the amours of angels with women, who bore to them demons, the authors of idol oracles, and the enemies of Christians ; but here, also, they who make the harmony of the fathers authoritative take the liberty to differ. Why ? Is it for any other reason than because the present times will not bear these hybrid demons, half angelic, half human ? Would not those who are labouring to bring us back to the happy days of ignorance in which the fathers lived, profit by the success of the scheme ; and openly declare that what all the early fathers believed must be true, and what nothing but a false modern philosophy could ever have condemned ? Exorcisms would again become the legerdmain of priests.

Such are the variations of those who laud the canon of Vincent of Lerens—"that a catholic tradition is that which is believed by *all, every where, and at all times.*" Could any but a sophist, or an idiot, have paraded such a rule ? Always, or at all times ! Who does not see that Vincent's *all times* differs, by many ages, from ours ; and from the *all times* of Irenæus, the supposed patron of tradition, by not a few ? To Irenæus, the catholic tradition was the amours of angels ; to Vincent, it was non-

catholic; because fathers who were, to Irenæus, sons, grandsons, or great-grandsons, had spurned it from them, though formerly always *believed*. To us, it is confessed to be one of the follies of the fathers; to our children some may hope that it will be deemed patristic wisdom again; for they will, perhaps, attempt to prove that it was always believed.

Who can decide where the list of the fathers should end? What reason can be assigned for closing it with the name of Bernard? Why are schoolmen to be separated from the fathers? And why doctors from schoolmen? Rome has more wisely brought down authority to the present day; for if we descend below the inspired apostles, where can we stop?

While hosts of genuine works were suffered to perish (no sign of reverential deference), a manufactory of forgeries was set up. Were the former destroyed because they were too honest to leave the latter uncontradicted? The discovery of a few more works that had been put out of the way, might change the face of the church. Who can tell when the writers whom we know, only from Eusebius, Jerome, or Photius, may reappear; or what they will say when risen from the dead?

Yet, when we recover lost works, we know not how to trust the names they bear. Vigilius owns that he wrote much against heretics, under the name of Athanasius. Even Augustine could judge, only from the style, that certain letters ascribed to Cyprian were the production of another pen. In the editions of the fathers there are some works branded as forgeries, or, at least, the fruits of other men's labours. Whether we are accepting or whether we are rejecting the works of antiquity, we frequently cannot tell; and are left to the cold consolation of knowing that the brightest lights of former ages were as uncertain as ourselves. The ancient witnesses have been tampered with and castrated by editors, especially since

the Reformation awakened the fears of Rome, lest it should be discovered that the fathers bear testimony against "children that are corrupters."

Impostures, once fondly cherished, are now suffered to drop silently into oblivion ; because it is found to be vain to contend against evidence and common sense. Superstition and error, therefore, are deprived of support formerly thought to be incontrovertible. But, where it has been found possible to shut out the light, exploded authorities are still cited, by men of the same church, which in some countries professes to think with the learned, but in others speaks with the vulgar. Thus, while antiquated authorities are abandoned, and new ones are, by the recovery of lost works, introduced, those weights are taken out of one scale, and these are put into the other, till Œdipus could not guess how the balance shall at last stand.

Such are the consequences of setting up other authorities as co-dictators with prophets and apostles, inspired by God to lay the only "foundation on which the church is built." The authors of this treason against the sole authority of the inspiring Spirit, if ignorant of the facts of the case, are reduced to the condition of the vulgar, on whom they attempt authoritatively to impose ; if cognizant of the whole, are wickedly introducing into the church witnesses which they dare not suffer to be cross-questioned, lest their ignorance, uncertainty, discrepancy, and falsehood, should be betrayed.

The fathers appealed to, as umpires, to terminate our disputes concerning the meaning of Scripture, plunge us into new perplexities, for they often confess that they knew not what to think, and when they profess to know, they seem as if they could not, or would not, tell us ; while the grand cause of disputation still remains—the unwillingness of the moderns to hear what the fathers say. Sometimes their palpable errors create anxiety to

explain away their words, and too often their scriptural truth begets a determination that they *shall* not say what our prejudices have decided that they ought not to mean. Those who attach least importance to the ancients are most likely to judge them impartially, which is but small praise where all are liable to be led astray by prejudice. But when men are sworn to the doctrines of a church, which either claims to be infallible, or is supposed never to err, and appeal to antiquity to prove that the church has always thought as they think, what adequate judge of human nature will expect impartiality? or wonder if the inquirers dictate to their oracle, and make it speak what they please? Who, of all the devoted slaves to the fathers, is willing to see such a church as is exhibited by Clement of Rome?

Contrary expositions may be drawn from the comments of the fathers on almost every passage in the Bible, and, what is worse, some of them exceedingly absurd; while the commentators distinguished by extraordinary penetration are so few, that we gloat over a gleam of light as the merchant who found in the ocean a goodly pearl. Expositions of Scripture, derived from a careful analysis of the original words, a view of the whole connexion, the scope and argument of the book, and parallel passages in the same writer, or others, are as foreign from the fathers as are the chemical gases, steam engines, and iron roads.

It was shrewdly said, "If we believe transubstantiation, we cannot believe transubstantiation; for that doctrine, teaching us to distrust our senses, forbids us to be sure that we *see* it written or *hear* it preached." So, if we believe the fathers, we cannot believe the fathers; for fathers teach us to disbelieve fathers. If we believe Augustine, we cannot believe Tertullian; but if we revere Cyprian, we must take Tertullian as our master. Trusting to Ruffinus, we must bow to Origen, as not only most

learned, but orthodox; whom, hearkening to bishops and councils, we must abjure as a heretic. All the earliest fathers are vaunted as the highest authorities, and all the most learned of the subsequent age reject their authority, discarding their doctrine of the loves of the angels, their dæmonogony, and the Millennium, as dreams.

As to rites and ceremonies, if we believe the idolaters of the fathers, *we* are the fathers. Were it not a theme too serious for ridicule, we must treat it as a joke, that the church which pretends to maintain the authority of the ancients, sets up, as a rival, its own. The fathers, always in their mouth, are far from their hearts. The old labourers employed to rear the proud edifice of the hierarchy, and adorn it with rites, are, when the building is finished, discarded by the architects, along with the scaffold, and the world is told that the church has, at all times, authority to decree rites and ceremonies, and declare by infallible wisdom the true Christian faith. What is this but saying, "Avaunt, ye ancients; we are the fathers;—Away with your simple rustic forms; we can create better;—Silence, ye musty expositions; who shall pretend to teach infallibility?"

It was surely the design of God to demonstrate, by all the absurdities and all the contradictions of the opposite system, the sole authority of the inspired writings, which are the only apostolical fathers. All others, consulted as authorities, would taint a reader, not in his dotage, with infidelity; such is their ignorance, their imbecility, their conceit, their false philosophy, their demonology, their Buddhist asceticism, their indecency, their prelatical pride, their contests for superiority, their self-righteousness, their contradictions of each other and of the Scriptures on which they profess to build their faith. It is only by retreating to the divine oracles that we recover our faith, which had been made to stagger; our purity, which had been defiled; and our peace, which had become a trembling dove. From

the Bible we learn what to accept and what to refuse in other writings, which, if they are to be taken or rejected in the gross, must certainly be rejected ; for no one sane mind can receive all that they contain.

God has thus placed a great gulf between inspired and uninspired writers. If, after reading the Hebrew Scriptures, we descend to other works in that tongue, the Targums, the Mishna, and Gemara, we find that we have made a transition from wisdom to folly, from dignity to meanness, from purity to pollution, from infallible verities to gross falsehoods ; and are compelled to conclude that the ancient writers were under an influence of which the more modern were bereft. The same experience, on passing from the New Testament to the fathers, necessitates the same conclusion. He is blind (happy if not wilfully blind) who sees not the finger of God here, pointing us to the more excellent way ; he is deaf (happy if not stopping his ears) who hears not the voice of God ; saying, " Cease from man ; for wherein is he to be accounted of ? Search the Scriptures, for in them ye have eternal life."

But those who make high pretensions to ancient Christianity oppose this exclusive appeal to Scripture in a strain which almost compels us to suspect them of infidelity ; for they say, " The Bible is large and obscure, and apparently contradictory, containing many things that are open to the same objections as are brought against the fathers." Were we to grant to this infidel reasoning all the truth, and all the force, which it claims, what would it prove ? That we must go to the fathers instead of, or in aid of, the Scriptures ? That we must exchange a book that we can carry in our pocket, for a library that we could not bear on our shoulders ? Are the fathers less difficult than the Scriptures ? Is not the comment more embarrassing than the text ? Must we, then, seek relief from difficulties by plunging into still greater ? Would it be thought, in a court of justice, good logic or good law, to appeal from the variety

which attends even a few original witnesses, to a Babel of reports at second or third hand, which embarrass the jury a hundred-fold more? No; we still must say with the apostle, "Let God be true, but every man a liar. As it is written that thou mayest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou art judged."

Confirmed, then, by the perusal of the most ancient theology, in the exclusive authority of Scripture, we should pursue with redoubled zeal our high vocation, to restore the scriptural polity, which, while it continued in purity and vigour, promised to fill the world with "the churches of the saints." The system introduced by the apostles, who were faithful to their Lord, bears all the marks of his wisdom, purity, and grace; being simple, yet effective; benevolent, though strict; uniting each church in a compact bond, while maintaining with a wise independence catholic union to the aggregate of the whole.

The purity of the churches, as consisting of those who are "called to be saints," is of their very essence, as all the designations of the inspired and uninspired epistles to them show; and only those who maintain that principle, by receiving none but visible Christians, and casting out such as prove themselves unworthy of the name, are entitled to be called churches of Christ. By this marked distinction of character from the rest of mankind, the world was at first convinced that our religion was divine; but as soon as the church was confounded with the world, its progress was arrested; for conversions were, from that fatal era, little more than a change of name. Why, then, should heaven interfere to spread a system that was "of the earth earthy?"

The rights and liberties of the faithful can be preserved, only by the order which Christ has established, to exalt their character by entrusting them with important privileges, that they may be efficient instruments in his hand. For this reason the enemy has sought to degrade them into nullities, the blind slaves of a usurping priesthood, which

was a mere mimicry of Jews and heathens, a treason against Christ's sole proper priesthood, and against the common privilege of Christians, who are all "made kings and priests to God." But let the royal priesthood remember the wisdom and the grace which it demands; for the abuse of privileges procures, as it deserves, their ultimate loss. Our liberties are those of Christians, who "call no man master on earth," indeed; but who know also and remember, that "one is their master in heaven."

Let the pastors feel that they rank with the Clements and the Polycarps of ancient days, those presbyter-bishops of congregational churches, appointed with the consent of the *πλήθος*, the multitude, or majority of the faithful, to watch over the flock of Christ, having no bishop over them, but the *αρχιποίμην*, the "chief shepherd and bishop of souls." The pastors, who are called to be faithful unto *death*, antiquity, as well as Scripture and reason, shows that the churches have a right to remove when proved unworthy of their choice. For the bishop should be the guardian, not the traitor, to the people's sacred interests; since churches were not made for ministers, but ministers for churches. It is the bishop's highest honour, that his responsible office over men entitled to judge for themselves, he holds by no other tenure than the force of truth on their consciences, and the sway which usefulness and worth must have over the Christian heart. Such were the martyred bishops of the purest days, before whom modern titles, power, pageantry, and wealth, may hide their diminished heads.

The ancient order of preaching bishops is perpetuated in scriptural churches, to whom the apostle still says, "Obey them that have the rule over you, who have spoken to you the word of God, whose faith imitate; submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls as they that must give an account." Neither antiquity nor Scripture knows anything of a bishop that, instead of watching and labouring in the bosom of one flock of Christ's sheep, rules over the shep-

herds of many. Only he who feeds is, by the Chief Shepherd, to whom alone the account must be rendered, empowered to guide or rule the faithful flock.

When all pastors were equal, fellow-servants to the same Lord, abstaining from attempts to bind each other by creeds and laws, Irenæus could say, "The churches of God through the whole world have one belief;" and the congregational churches, which retain the same equality and freedom, have this identity of faith. Pretending to improve upon the ancient harmony of liberty, men have produced, either the strife of error, or the peace of the grave; all kinds of differences in a body that pretends to be one, or the orthodoxy of blind ignorance and death-like indifference. The primitive unity of the church will never be restored, but with her liberty; nor will the pastors "all speak the same thing," till they hearken to him who said, "All ye are brethren; one is your master, even Christ."

The presence of the Lord, ever afforded to those churches that are satisfied with his sole government, which appears to many so feeble and inadequate, still gives efficacy to his laws. "The gospel preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven" renews the ancient triumph: "When there comes into your assembly one that believeth not, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all, and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest, and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth."* That such victories of truth are unknown to those who forsake the apostles, for fathers of a late and degenerate age, is virtually confessed by their own words, "The sacraments, not preaching, are the sources of divine grace."† The only *source* of divine grace is the heart of eternal love; but "the preaching of the cross is still the power of God to salvation, to every one that believes," as it was when Irenæus said, "The barbarians had it written in their hearts, not with ink, but by the Spirit of the living

* 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25.

† Oxford Tracts.

God." He that says, preaching is not the means of grace, confesses that *his* preaching is not.

Churches built up of living stones, laid on Christ the only foundation, welcome the discipline which "the Lord has appointed for edification, and not for destruction." Here alone it is the act of the church, in obedience to the King of saints; elsewhere, it is the rule of "Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence," receiving, or casting out whom he pleases. Like Cyprian, a scriptural bishop "resolves to do nothing without his flock," who, subject to the same laws, will not sanction undue severity, and, implicated in the character of the church, will not screen one who is disgraceful to the Christian name, unless they are themselves corrupted by neglect of discipline.

The deacons of the churches, entrusted, "not merely with meats and drinks," as Ignatius says, (though like Justin's deacons, they hand round the elements of the sacred supper,) but presiding at the tables where the offerings of the faithful are administered, have the high honour of restoring the primitive order by which ministers, leaving the money-tables to others, give themselves solely to the word of God and prayer. How far is this beyond the modern nominal ephemeral thing that is created only to be destroyed, the man being made a deacon to-day merely that he may be made a priest to-morrow! Were Christ's institutions intended to be parodied by the mockery of child's play? They who disburse the liberality of others should be forward to every good work themselves, that they may promote obedience to the laws of Christ, who ordained "that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel," that the widows should not be neglected, and that "distribution be made to the necessities of saints." If there is anything in which the ancient church deserves to be our pattern, it is in its liberal voluntary offerings, to which tithes and compulsory payments, the offspring of

a comparatively modern degeneracy, have given a death-blow.

Through a long tissue of infernal machinations and a fearful ferment of corruption, we have seen the church so marvellously preserved, and the truth coming out so much more clear and vigorous, that we are inexcusable, if we cannot now rest assured that "no weapon formed against Zion shall prosper, and every tongue that rises up against her, she shall condemn; for this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." At the modern attempts to bring back the church to that period of her history when corruptions had become rampant, we may frown, because it is guilty; but we may smile, too, for it is futile. The conspirators may not choose to go higher than to Cyprian, or even the Nicene fathers, or may appeal to earlier writers, only to praise their blots; but who would let the foe dictate the tactics of both armies? Have they appealed to the fathers? To the fathers they shall go; to the fathers of those whom some delight to call *the* fathers. "He that taketh the wise in their own craftiness," will thus "teach them by the briars of the wilderness" that they have raised spirits which they cannot lay. "Truth," says Tertullian, "dreads nothing but concealment;" and we have only to tell the whole truth, in order to put down the attempt to bring us again into bondage to crafty priests. Let the fathers by eminence speak, and let the world, as well as the church, hear, if patience will hold out to the end. Translate; print; publish; explain; tell all.

It will then be seen that the world has been imposed upon by those who appealed to the fathers, to avoid the Scriptures, aware that the people could more easily study for themselves a single book translated into most tongues, than procure or read a library in the dead languages. But it must be shown that corruption can no more claim the

fathers than the Scriptures. How the advocates for error shun the testimony of the divine word is not sufficiently known.*

* Dodwell, a learned monomaniac, maintained that, in the apostolic age, the church was governed by a pope, not Peter at Rome, but James at Jerusalem; that when he died, the monarchy was transferred to Ephesus, where John reigned; and that when the last apostle was dead, and not till then, bishops were created, to furnish with a pope every church which had previously known nothing but presbyters. According to this scheme, which its author makes essential to salvation, bishops are post-apostolical, and presbyters are the only ministers whom apostles knew. Some will, therefore, prefer going to Rome for a continuation of the original popedom; and others will say, if the apostolic churches could do without prelates, we also will content ourselves with the original presbytery.

But Hammond, a no less zealous episcopalian, allows none but bishops in the apostles' days, leaving the presbyters to be appointed, about the time of Ignatius. These two schemes, therefore, agree in declaring that there was but one kind of ministers of the word in each church while the apostles were alive; for Dodwell says, there were presbyters, but no bishops; and Hammond, that there were bishops, but no presbyters; though the Scriptures speak of presbyter-bishops. We may appeal to these champions of prelacy, therefore, as witnesses, both ways; wherein they agree, and wherein they differ; Dodwell declaring that the presbyters had over them no bishops; and Hammond, that the bishops had under them no presbyters. Who can avoid the conclusion that they were both right and both wrong, and that the Scriptures furnish the harmonizing principle, in presbyter-bishops,—one order, without superiority or inferiority?

But as the advocates of a hierarchy, turn which way they will, cannot escape the censure of Scripture; so when they confess that their scheme is post-apostolical, and therefore cannot be scriptural, turning to boast of the fathers, they meet the same fate. We take them on their own ground, and attack them in their strongest fortress, the oldest of the fathers, nearest to the times of the apostles, Clement, who is vaunted as Peter's immediate successor. He knows but two officers of the church, bishops and deacons, as appointed by the apostles according to ancient prophecy; and Polycarp knows no other bishop than one who is a presbyter.

Ignatius, then, is the refuge, as a witness for two, not three, orders of ministers of the *word*. Large epistles, forged in his name, and confidently appealed to in the days of ignorance, are now, by the general consent of the learned, swept into the limbo of vanity. Seven shorter ones remain. Unadulterated? the reader will naturally ask. Would they who deemed it a pious fraud to forge letters he never wrote, be too conscientious to alter what he did write? We have strong reasons for suspecting that we have not always the genuine testimony of the martyr.

But granting to those who lean on this broken reed, that Ignatius is

What, then, can we think of those who are seeking to bring back our countrymen, not as they pretend, to the state of the primitive church, but to the days of men who bewailed a degeneracy which is now, in spite of their own counter-testimony, set up as the standard of purity? To the fanaticism of another Shilo, and a pretended miraculous gift of tongues, has at length succeeded, not a new delusion, but a revival of the old, which, under the patronage of moderate learning and semi-asceticism, is making its boast of the fathers. Some, it is to be feared, know whither they are tending, and keep the dome of St. Peter's steadily in view; but others, hoodwinked, are pursuing the same course, without seeing their road, or their end. Have the fires of Smithfield burned in vain? Was not the horror of Popery which they created just and salutary, a merciful reaction produced by him who confounds the counsels of the ungodly? Can the system which introduced that blot on the Christian name, the burning of men for heretics, which Rome has never disavowed, any longer pretend to be the religion of the merciful Saviour, who told those that would call fire from heaven, that they knew not what spirit they were of? Can these be sincere men, who, eating the bread of a Protestant church, labour to undo the work of the Reformation, and, by Jesuitical

instar omnium, will they abide by his testimony? He makes deacons, not ministers of the word, but leaves this to bishops and presbyters, whom he makes, not priests; and he exhibits them ministering together in one congregation. But the wiser, or more cunning men, turn from such fathers and such a church, to those who heard of the apostles as we hear of the Saxon Heptarchy; sily slipping these sons into the category of *the* fathers. How long is the world to be abused by false pretences? Are we never to have enough of the fulfilment of the prophecies concerning Antichrist, "Speaking lies in hypocrisy?" Is it not time to unmask the imposture, and to show that they who flee from Scripture, conscious that it will not bear the modern superstructure, passing over to fathers that disown the innovations, at last take refuge in illegitimate sons, who boast the exclusive possession of a church which their corruptions have unchurched? The importance of the subject must be our apology for the repetition that may be observed in this note.

expositions, supplant the articles they have subscribed? Would they, if successful in establishing their priestly domination, use it less cruelly than their predecessors? Would it not again be said, that "he who crept in like a fox ruled like a lion, till he was hated like a dog?"* Shall our countrymen be left to rush back to Egypt, unobstructed, unwarned? Our protest may be unheeded, perhaps unheard; but, at least, we should be able to say, "We have delivered our souls; their blood is on their own heads."

To those who are not deceivers, but deceived, especially the professors of evangelical truth, who have attempted to amalgamate it with the prevailing semi-popery, it is but a Christian duty to address a word of expostulatory warning. Your sincere concern for the salvation of the soul, and your reverence for the will of God, is abused by men who hate the doctrines you (once, at least) held dear. You know not whither you are tending; for the truths which awakened you from carelessness, or inspired you with peace, will be swallowed up in that false confidence in rites and forms from which you erst deemed it a mercy to have escaped. The regenerating grace of the Spirit, which made "the preaching of the cross the power of God to salvation," you are now learning to identify with baptism, which, you know, leaves millions to "live without God in the world." For justification by faith, which formerly was to you glad tidings, the leaders of your new party are openly substituting justification by the sacraments, never avowed till Trent employed it to countermine Luther. Once you saw Christ in heaven, as your only sacrifice, priest, and altar; and can you now bow down to an altar of stone or wood; call ministers by the name of priests,

* Laud, who hesitated whether he should not receive from the pope a cardinal's hat, and who devoutly gave thanks for the slitting of the nose and cutting off the ears of Leighton, is very significantly sainted by this school.

which Christ never gave to them; and talk of offering again that sacrifice which "he offered once for all?" "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" Are ye aware of "the beggarly elements to which you desire to be in bondage?" Are you ready to go all the way back to Rome, that you are adopting, one after another, her essential principles, till a crafty Jesuit, meeting you on your own ground, would draw you over the frontier, ere ever you were aware? And all this, under the false colours of the church of the fathers! Have you ever read the fathers? Are you so well acquainted with their voluminous writings as to secure yourselves from being imposed upon, by extracts obtruded upon you, in the hope that you will not be able to judge of them for yourselves? Can you suppose that, if this were the road to truth, the apostles would not have referred us to the fathers? Has not Christ charged you to "Search the Scriptures; for in them you have eternal life"?

Look around, or look back, where we may, we find no era, but the short one of virgin innocence, in which we can acquiesce; and even the apostles saw the apostasy commence. Must we, then, conclude that the golden days are yet to come? Why should we not? The revelation of the fortunes of the church opens with storms; but it closes with a view of paradise restored. If we are told that religion is not like human science, a field for discovery and improvement, we answer, "This is both true and false;" true, because the way of salvation is of divine, not human, dictation, and therefore is to be learned by revelation; but false, because texts of Scripture are to us what the phenomena of nature are to the philosopher, and, like them, may be more or less known, and pursued to their ultimate results. Though the great outlines of divine truths were always known, if but to a few; their more profound reasons, tendencies, relations, and effects, never

having been thoroughly sounded, are reserved for more able students and happier times than the church has seen since the apostles received the martyr's crown.

Not that we look for this improvement from philosophy, which having taken a happier, because more useful, turn, is multiplying the powers of man; but, seeing in this the hand of God, and knowing that his providence is subservient to the kingdom of Christ, we detect an undercurrent, the operations of a more delicate and mighty agency for the improvement of the church. The promised effusion of the Spirit, in the last days, will render the volume which he has inspired better known, and thus more highly esteemed; while the light, thrown by the fulfilment, on prophecies that are now necessarily obscure, will concur with the warnings supplied by the errors of ages which perverted the Scriptures, to make our descendants "wiser than the ancients by keeping God's statutes." The theology of the early church has exposed the depravity and folly of men; that of the last days will display the wisdom, and power, and grace of God. As the Jews, when restored to the fold again, will look back with horror to the course which their church pursued, till it consummated its apostasy by the wicked hands that crucified the Lord of glory; so will the regenerated Christian church review the scene of universal apostasy, turning the most agonizing look to the central city, and saying with the beloved apostle, "When I saw her, I wondered with great astonishment." What cannot the depravity of man pervert? What cannot the grace of God restore?

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX A. Page 70.

IN the question of tradition is involved the succession of bishops, by which the handing down of the Scriptures and of all Christian truth is said to be made sure. Let us try the boasted fortress of the succession, that of the bishops of Rome. Irenæus says, "But as it would be a long affair to enumerate the successions of all the churches, we will give that of the greatest and most ancient, and best known to all; the church founded and constituted at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul, and which has, from the apostles, the tradition and the faith announced, coming to us by the succession of bishops. For, to this church, on account of the more powerful principality, (not on account of Peter's chair, but Cæsar's throne,) it is necessary for every church to come, that is, those believers who are in every place, in which has always been preserved by those who are everywhere the tradition from the apostles. Founding, therefore, and instructing the church, the blessed apostles delivered to Linus* the episcopate, or the oversight of the administration of the church. To him succeeded Anacletus; after him, in the third place from the apostles, Clement obtained the lot of the episcopate, who also saw the apostles themselves, and conversed with them, while as yet he had the preaching of the apostles sounding (in his ears) and the tradition before his eyes.

"For he was not alone; many yet surviving who were taught by the apostles. To this Clement succeeded Euaristus; and to Euaristus, Alexander; and afterwards, sixth from the apostles, Sixtus was appointed; and from this, Telesphorus, who endured martyrdom most gloriously; and then Hyginus; afterwards Pius; after whom (was) Anicetus. But when to Anicetus Soter had succeeded, now,

* 2 Tim. iv. 21.

in the twelfth place, Eleutherius holds the episcopate from the apostles. By this ordination and succession, that tradition which is from the apostles in the church, and the preaching of the truth, has come even to us. And this is a most full display, that there is one and the same vivifying faith, which has been preserved in the church from the apostles, and has been delivered in truth." *

All this seems very plain and sure ; but "he that is first in his own cause seems right, till his neighbour cometh and searcheth him out." It must be recollected, then, that Eleutherius, who is said to be bishop while Irenæus was writing, is assigned to the period between A.D. 177 and 192, so that from the apostles a century had elapsed ; and we know what uncertainty comes over names and dates in the course of a hundred years, even with all the advantages we derive from increased civilization and the press. All this boasted perspicuous order is strange confusion. In the notes to the Paris edition of Irenæus, a most zealous, not to say furious, Romanist makes the cool observation, that "It signifies little, though all do not agree who was the first that succeeded to the blessed Peter, in the Roman see." † How silently and unceremoniously this writer drops Saint Paul, whom Irenæus had mentioned along with Peter ! Yet, if either of them is to be omitted, it should certainly be Peter, who was the apostle of the circumcision, or Jews ; while Paul, ‡ as the apostle of the uncircumcision, we know from the Scriptures preached and wrote to the Romans, the head of the Gentile world. Irenæus expressly asserts that Linus was the first bishop, appointed by the apostles themselves, and with him agree, as the annotator says, "Jerome, Epiphanius, Chrysostom, Dorotheus, Optatus, Augustin; and Eusebius. Clement himself, however, claims to be Peter's successor, § to which Ruffinus, his Latin translator, above a thousand years ago, consents, and with him agree, Epiphanius, Damasus, Marianus, and Sabellicus." It will strike the attentive reader that this zealous Romanist places Epiphanius as a witness on both sides. What is such testimony worth ? How can the advocate of Rome extricate her from the embarrassment ? By the following words : "I am best pleased with the reconciliation of the most learned theologian, Saunders ; that Peter, indeed, ordained Clement ; but before him, Linus and Cletus are placed in the catalogue of the Roman bishops ; because Peter had taken them as his coadjutors." What ! Is it come to this, that we are indebted to

* Advers. Heres. lib. iii. c. 3.

+ Page 239.

† Galatians.

§ For this, the Romanist appeals to the Apostolical Constitutions, 45.

the lucky guess of Saunders for the solution of this grand difficulty who was the immediate successor to St. Peter at Rome? Cannot we guess, too, as well as "the most learned theologian, Saunders"? But while we are told, with equal gravity and truth, that it signifies little whom we make the first bishop at Rome; should we ever have heard this confession, if the advocates for apostolical succession had not found themselves at fault in the very first step? The primary link that should fasten all others to the apostolic chair being broken, or wanting, of what value is the rest of the chain of bishops or popes? Yet this is only one of the difficulties of the boasted apostolic line; new contradictions meeting us at each step, and new guesses being employed to extricate us from our embarrassment; for of certainty there is not an atom. Tillemont introduces the Babel of contradictory authorities by observing, that it is difficult to reconcile them, and still more difficult to find anything certain. This confession from a zealous and rather credulous Catholic is more than we should have expected, though his piety and candour inspire us with the highest respect.*

APPENDIX B. Page 187.

WITH regard to ministerial robes, the Alexandrian Clement, who mentions the stole of the Jewish priests, merely compares it with our Lord's putting on humanity, and our putting on Christ.

Tertullian speaks of the habit of prayer, with reference not to ministers, but to all the faithful: "As we touch some one instance of vain observance, it will not be amiss to notice other things also, in which folly will deservedly be reprov'd; for things of this kind are not to be ascribed to religion, but to superstition; and are of a curious rather than rational obedience; indeed, even for this reason, to be restrained, because they put us on a level with the Gentiles. As it is the custom of some to lay aside their cloaks in order to offer prayer: for so the nations come to their idols. Which, however, if it ought to have been done, the apostles, who teach concerning the habit of prayer, would have included, unless there are any who think that Paul left his cloak in prayer with Carpus. Truly he who heard the three saints in the furnace of the king of Babylon, praying "in their coats, their hose, and their hats," would not hear those who wear their cloaks!—De Orat.

All that Tertullian says of the habit of prayer applies to the whole

* Vol. ii. pt. i. p. 272-4, and p. 480.

church, and censures the affectation of laying aside the cloak ; for of *putting on* any particular dress he seems to know nothing. He declares that Paul, who teaches concerning the mode of prayer, would have prescribed what was necessary for prayer ; and, therefore, all that he has not prescribed is vain, curious, and heathenish superstition, rather than rational Christian religion.

APPENDIX C. Page 187.

Of the Creed.

THE formulary, to which the Greeks gave the name of symbol, though denominated by us, Creed, from the first word, Credo, "I believe," has been compared to the watchword in the army, as if the Christian soldiers knew each other by this sign. But it was rather an imitation of the mystic images and words by which those who had been initiated into the mysteries of the heathens might be known and admitted into the sanctuary of the gods. In the fourth century, it began to be taught that each of the apostles contributed one of the twelve articles into which the creed is divided, though it was the Nicene Creed that was first adopted and enforced. What is called the Apostles' Creed, which at length prevailed, was originally very short, and has varied as time advanced, the article on the descent into hell being in neither the ancient nor oriental creed ; and that on the communion of saints being last inserted. Not only do different writers give different forms, but the same father, at one time, differs from himself at another.

As superstition advanced, the Catechumens were not intrusted with the creed till just before their baptism, and then were charged not to blacken it with ink, but to keep it written only in their hearts, concealed from the profane. It was at last, however, ordered to be read in the service of the church ; but as this custom commenced among the Greeks, it was the Nicene, not the Apostles' Creed, that first received this honour. Wonders were told of the virtues of the creed, which we now give, as far as it can be ascertained to have existed in the first three centuries :—

"Credentes in unum Deum fabricatorem Cœli ac Terræ, et omnium quæ in eis sunt, per Christum Jesum Dei Filium. Qui propter eminentissimam erga Figmentum suum dilectionem, eam quæ esset ex Virgine, generationem sustinuit, ipse per se hominem adunans Deo, et passus sub Pontio Pilato, et resurgens, et in claritate

receptus, in gloria venturus Salvator eorum qui salvantur, et Judex eorum qui judicantur, et mittens in ignem æternum transfiguratores veritatis, et contemptores patris sui et adventus ejus.”—Irenæus, lib. iii. c. 4.

“Regula est autem Fidei, ut jam hinc quid defendamus, profiteamur, illa scilicet, qua creditur unum omnino Deum esse, nec alium præter mundi creatorem, qui universa de nihilo produxerit per verbum suum, primo omnium emissum: id verbum Filium ejus appellatum in nomine Dei, varie visum Patriarchis, in Prophetis semper auditum: postremo delatum ex spiritu patris Dei et virtute in Virginem Mariam, carnem factum in utero ejus, et ex ea natum, egisse Jesum Christum, exinde prædicasse novam legem et novam promissionem Regni Cœlorum, virtutes fecisse, fixum cruci tertia die resurrexisse: in cœlos creptum, sedere ad dexteram patris, misisse vicariam vim Spiritus sancti, qui credentes agat: venturum cum claritate ad sumendos sanctos in vitæ æternæ, et promissorum cœlestium fructum, et ad Prophanos judicandos igni perpetuo, facta utriusque partis resuscitatione cum carnis restitutione. Hæc regula à Christo—instituta nullas habet apud nos quæstiones, nisi quas Hæreses inferunt, et quæ Hæreticos faciunt.”—Tertul. de Præscript. c. 13.

“Unicum quidem Deum credimus, sub hac tamen dispensatione quam *οἰκονομίαν* dicimus, ut unicus Dei sit et Filius Sermo ipsius, qui ex ipso processerit, per quem omnia facta sunt, et sine quo factum est nihil: hunc missum à patre in Virginem, et ex ea natum hominem et Deum, filium hominis et filium Dei, et cognominatum Jesum Christum: hunc passum, hunc mortuum et sepultum secundum Scripturas, et resuscitatum à Patre, et in cœlo resumptum, sedere ad dexteram patris, venturum judicare vivos et mortuos: qui exinde miserit secundum promissionem suam à Patre Spiritum sanctum paracletum, sanctificatorem fidei eorum qui credunt in Patrem, et Filium, et Spiritum sanctum. Hanc regulam ab initio Evangelii decucurrisset, &c.”—Tertul. advers. Praxean, c. 2.

“Regula Fidei una omnino est, sola immobilis et irreformabilis credendi scilicet in unicum Deum omnipotentem, mundi conditorem, et filium ejus Jesum Christum, natum ex Virgine Maria, crucifixum sub Pontio Pilato, tertio die resuscitatum à mortuis, receptum in cœlis; sedentem nunc ad dexteram Patris, venturum judicare vivos et mortuos, per carnis etiam resurrectionem.”—Tertul. de Virginib. veland., c. 1.

Each of these four creeds is different, though the last three are from the same writer. “He descended into hell,” is in neither of

them; nor is the article on the communion of saints. That what is now called emphatically *the* Creed came from the apostles, is manifestly the fabulous story of a late and superstitious age.

APPENDIX K. Page 184.

The following Hymn is found in Clement's works:—

“Ὕμνος τοῦ Σωτῆρος Χριστοῦ, τοῦ ἁγίου Κλήμεντος.

Στόμιον πῶλων ἀδαῶν,
Πτερὸν ὀρνίθων ἀπλανῶν,
Οἶαξ νηπίων ἀτρεκῆς,
Ποιμὴν ἀρνῶν βασιλικῶν·
Τοὺς σοὺς ἀφελεῖς
Παῖδας ἄγειρον,
Αἰνεῖν ἁγίως,
Ὑμνεῖν ἀδόλως
Ἀκάκοις στόμασιν
Παίδων ἡγήτορα Χριστόν.

Βασιλεῦ ἁγίων,
Λόγε πανδαμάτωρ
Πατρὸς ὑψίστου,
Σοφίας πρύτανι,
Στήριγμα πόνων
Αἰωνοχαρὲς,
Βροτέας γενεᾶς
Σῶτερ Ἰησοῦ,
Ποιμὴν, ἀροτῆρ,
Οἶαξ, στόμιον,
Πτερὸν οὐράνιον
Παναγοῦς ποιμνῆς·
Ἄλιεῦ μερόπων
Τῶν σωζομένων,
Πελάγους κακίας
Ἰχθῦς ἀγνοῦς
Κύματος ἐχθροῦ
Γλυκερῇ ζῳῇ δελεάζων·
Ἡγοῦ, προβάτων
Λογικῶν ποιμὴν·
Ἄγιε ἡγοῦ
Βασιλεῦ παίδων ἀνεπάρων.

Ἰχνια Χριστοῦ,
Ὅδὸς οὐρανία
Λόγος ἀέναος,
Αἰὼν ἀπλετος,
Φῶς αἰδίου,
Ἐλέους πηγὴ,
Ῥεκτὴρ ἀρετῆς·
Ξεμνή βιοτῇ
Θεὸν ὑμνοῦντων, Χριστὲ Ἰησοῦ,
Γάλα οὐράνιον
Μαστῶν γλυκερῶν
Νύμφης χαρίτων,
Σοφίας τῆς σῆς ἐκθλιβόμενον,
Οἱ νηπίαχοι
Ἀταλοῖς στόμασιν
Ἀτιταλλόμενοι,
Θηλῆς λογικῆς
Πνεύματι δροσερῷ
Ἐμπιπλάμενοι,
Αἴνους ἀφελεῖς,
Ὑμνοὺς ἀτρεκεῖς,
Βασιλεῦ Χριστῷ,
Μισθοὺς ὁσίους
Ζωῆς διδαχῆς,
Μέλπωμεν ὁμοῦ,
Μέλπωμεν ἀπλῶς,
Παῖδα κρατερόν.
Χορὸς εἰρήνης
Οἱ Χριστόγονοι,
Λαὸς σάφρων,
Ψάλλωμεν ὁμοῦ Θεὸν εἰρήνης.

It is but justice to the author of the English imitation to insert his letter to the Editor of the Congregational Magazine:—

SIR,—You have recently published one or two interesting papers on an interesting topic—The Worship of Christ. The insertion of the following may possibly gratify some of your readers, as a sample of the early Christian hymns addressed to the Saviour. I take it from Potter's Clemens Alexandrinus, Oxford, 1715, and accompany it with a rough metrical version, neither so close, on the one hand, as I might easily have made it, nor so paraphrastic as I was tempted to make it, to reduce it to our modern taste. Each fourth line is intended simply as a rest for the voice, and usually has nothing to correspond with it in the original.

The style of the hymn marks clearly enough a declining age. The nervous simplicity of Scripture poetry is forsaken for multiplied epithet and incongruous metaphor. The piece, however, furnishes evidence of the prominent place given to the Lord Christ in the devotions of the second century.

I am, dear Sir, yours very respectfully,

D.

Hymn to Christ, attributed to Clemens of Alexandria.

O Thou, the wild will's tamer !
The wand'ring wing's reclamer !
Our seaward pathway's framer,
Hear praise !

Shepherd, that goest before us !
Guardian, that watchest o'er us !
Receive our hymned chorus—
Our simple lays !

Thee, o'er thy saints who reignest,
Thy foes too who restrainest,
Who wisdom downward rainest,
We laud !

Thou lightenest toil's condition,
Sin finds in thee remission,
Thou only soul's physician !
Our Saviour God !

The heart's wide waste thou tillest !
Our bark to guide thou skillest !
Thou checkest as thou willest
Our ways !

Wing, for our sustentation !
 Net, for our reclamation
 From every bait's temptation !
 Ancient of days !

Lead, Lord of lambs, the lowly !
 Lead, King of saints, the holy !
 Lead, far from sin and folly,
 To thee !

Love's fountain, ever brimming !
 Way, Word, and Light undimming !
 Lifebreath of infants hymning
 Their choristry !

Heaven's breast for nurture pressing,
 The Spirit's dew's possessing,
 Be, Christ, for every blessing
 Adored !

Sing, mates, the Son of woman,
 Once cradled here as human :
 True God—but not less true man—
 The Christ—the Lord.

Ye babes upon the bosom,
 Ye youth in manhood's blossom,
 Sing Christ, and early choose him,
 Our peace !

Sing guilelessly the Giver
 Of mercy like a river.
 And him, O let us live for
 Till life shall cease !

For the modern invention, rhyme, nothing but rhythmus appears
 in the original, which commences thus :—

Bit for unbroken colts ;
 Wing of unwandering birds ;
 True helm of infants ;
 Shepherd of royal lambs,
 Thine own simple ones ;
 Gather the youths,

To praise holily,
 To hymn sincerely,
 With innocent mouths,
 Christ the leader of youths.
 O King of saints,
 Word all-subduing
 Of the Most High Father.
 &c. &c.

APPENDIX L. Page 149.

Jerome.

IDEM est ergo presbyter qui episcopus; et antequam diaboli instinctu studia in religione fierent, et diceretur in populis, Ego sum Pauli, Ego Apollo, Ego autem Cephæ, commune presbyterorum consilio, ecclesiæ gubernabantur. Postquam, vero unusquisque eos quos baptizaverat suos putabat esse, non Christi, in toto orbe decretum est, ut unus de presbyteris electus superponeretur cæteris, ad quem omnis ecclesiæ cura pertineret et schismatum semina tollerentur.

Sicut ergo presbyteri sciunt se ex ecclesiæ consuetudine ei qui sibi præpositus fuerit esse subjectos: ita episcopi noverint se magis consuetudine quam dispositionis dominicæ veritate presbyteris esse majores et in commune debere ecclesiam regere.*

Therefore the presbyter is the same as the bishop, and before that, by the instigation of the devil, there were parties in religion, and it was said among the people, I am of Paul, I of Apollos, and I of Cephæ, the churches were governed by the common council of the presbyters. But after every one thought that those whom he had baptized were his own, not Christ's, it was decreed through the whole world that one elected from the presbyters should be placed over the rest; to him all the care of the church should pertain, and the seeds of schisms be taken away.

As therefore the presbyters know that by the custom of the church they are subject to him who has been set over them, so the bishops may know that it is more by custom than by any real divine dispensation that they are greater than presbyters, and that they ought to rule the church in common.

* Jerome in Ep. ad Titum. Opera, vol. iv. p. 414. Paris, 1706.

Nam et Alexandria à Marco Evangelista usque ad Heraclam et Dionysium episcopos, presbyteri semper unum ex se electum, in excelsiori gradu collocatum episcopum nominabant; quomodo si exercitus imperatorem faciat; aut diaconi eligant de se quem industrium noverint, et archidiaconum vocent.

Audio quendam in tantam erupisse vecordiam, ut diaconos presbyteris id est episcopis anteferebat. Nam quum apostolus perspicue doceat eosdem esse presbyteros quos episcopos quis patiatur mensarum et viduarum minister ut supra eos se tumidus efferat.*

For, at Alexandria, from Mark the evangelist, even to Bishops Heraclas and Dionysius, the presbyters always denominated bishop, one chosen from among themselves and placed in a higher seat, just as if the army should make a general, or the deacons choose from among themselves one whom they knew to be diligent and call him archdeacon.

I hear that some one has become stupid enough to prefer deacons to presbyters, that is, to bishops. For when the apostle clearly teaches that the presbyters are the same as bishops, who could endure that a proud minister of tables and widows should exalt himself above them?

APPENDIX M. Page 37.

THE younger Pliny, Legate, or ex-prætor of Bythinia, writes thus to his emperor, Trajan, at the very commencement of the second century: "I have never been admitted into a knowledge of the Christians; therefore I know not how far they used to be punished or sought out. I have not a little hesitated whether a distinction should not be made of ages, or pardon be granted to penitents, or to him that once was and has ceased to be a Christian. Those who were brought before me I have interrogated, whether they were Christians; for those who confessed a second and third time, after threatening, if they persisted, I have ordered to be led away (to punishment). For I did not doubt that, whatever they were, that obstinacy should be punished. Roman citizens I marked to be sent to the city." After speaking of those who recanted, he says, "They affirmed, this was the sum of their fault, or error: that they were

* Epistola, 101, ad Evangelum. Hieron. vol. iv. pt. 2, p. 802-3. Paris, 1706.

accustomed, on a stated day, to meet before light, and to sing together a hymn to Christ as God; and to bind themselves, by a sacrament, not to commit thefts, or robberies, or adulteries; not to violate fidelity, nor, when called upon, to deny what was deposited with them."—Pliny, Ep. 97.



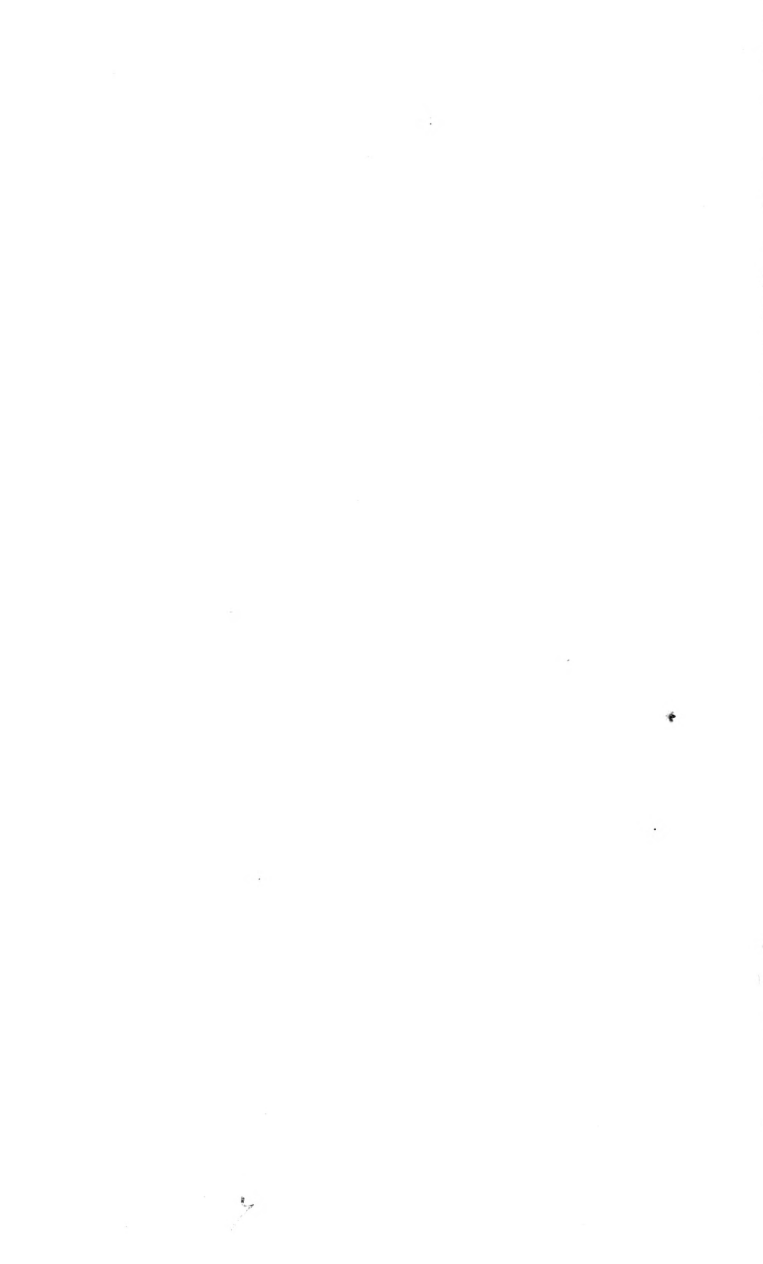
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